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'You don't have to see it to tee it':

an exploration of socio-spatial
practices in blind golf

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PhD Thesis

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Abstract

Geographers have only recently begun researching disability. Such research has addressed the oppression, exclusion and marginalisation of people with impairments by examining the disablist organisation of space. Whilst this work has political potency, it runs the risk of homogenising disabled people and neglecting issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. This thesis provides a corrective by examining experiences of access to, and participation in, golf among blind players in Scotland. It considers the social structuring of space – especially socio-spatial relations, interactions and attitudes – and gives particular emphasis to the agency of blind golfers.

Relevant literatures on disability, visual impairment and sport are reviewed in order to open up current debates within which this thesis was shaped. A reformulated social model perspective is offered with a view to ‘loosening up’ the distinction between impairment/disability and to recognise diversity among disabled people. A substantial gap is identified in the disability literature, concerned with sport, which the thesis addresses through a socio-spatial analysis. Against this background the thesis explores individual, lived experiences of disability by focusing on the experiences of blind golfers.

In order to investigate this, the research uses participant observation at events organised by The Scottish Blind Golf Society (SBGS) alongside ethnographic

interviews with blind golfers. This enabled the players' personal narratives and experiences to be explored as well as socio-spatial relationships and interactions associated with blind golf events.

Examining emerging themes from the data, the thesis discusses personal and organisational journeys into blind golf. The impact of less tangible barriers, particularly disabling attitudes, on the players' experiences of access to, and sense of inclusion in, golf are explored. I argue that barriers are embedded in the 'everyday' encounters in the golfing landscape between blind and sighted people. Although the golfers have accessed their chosen sport, this participation remains an unequal and disabling experience.

The thesis moves from considerations of the golfers' relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf, to the inter-personal relationships between players (blind golfer) and their guide (sighted person). The need for a guide raises key issues connected to disability and feminist debates surrounding the social relations of help. I focus on the way in which help is given and experienced from the perspectives of the player.

The thesis then considers the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape within the spaces of blind golf. It demonstrates how the golfers actively mediate their own identities and relationships in blind golf. Identifying, or being identified, as a 'blind golfer' is not intrinsically negative yet can be fraught with contradictions. I therefore argue for a more nuanced understanding of blind identities.

In conclusion, the thesis suggests that examining subjective experiences of disability allows perspectives on disability to shift from socio-spatial structures to socio-spatial practices. This approach greatly enriches discussion of processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to disability.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, and that where the work of others has been used it has been duly acknowledged.

Shonagh McEwan

4 March, 2004

1

Introduction

1.1 Introducing socio-spatial practices in blind golf

This thesis examines experiences of access to, and participation in, golf among visually impaired and blind players in Scotland through a case study of golfers involved in the Scottish Blind Golf Society (SBGS). Blind golf is a relatively recent sport and its popularity is increasing. This small group of SBGS members have secured a place for themselves within the sport of golf. This project seeks to learn from their experiences and thus investigates disabling barriers which impact upon blind people's access to, and sense of inclusion in, the sport. It is not simply concerned with the numbers of blind people who have accessed the sport; its exploration of access and inclusion extends beyond their numerical representation. It focuses on the quality of social interactions, relations and relationships experienced by blind people in the spaces of golf.

Blind golf is played according to the rules of golf for sighted players with minor exceptions (see section 4.2), the most important of which is the use of assistance from a sighted person who is referred to as a guide (see chapter five). The kind of help provided by a guide depends upon many things, such as the extent and type of visual impairment experienced by the player as well as any individual preferences they might have. For example, some players require a guide to physically place the clubhead behind the golf ball, whilst other players do not. In

general, a guide verbally describes the landscape ahead, tells the player the distance to the pin, and aligns the player in the correct direction. The rest is up to the golfer: they execute the shot on their own. It is critical, however, that the guide watches the golf ball for the player and guides them around the golf course.

Recent geographic research on disability has addressed the oppression, exclusion and marginalisation of people with impairments by examining the disablist organisation of space (for example: Imrie, 1996b; Gleeson, 1999a). Geographers have, therefore, drawn from the social model of disability, which argues that disability is a form of oppression that is socially and culturally produced, rather than resulting from an individual's impairment. Influenced by the work of Mike Oliver (1990) and others in Disability Studies (Abberley, 1987; Barnes, 1991; Barton, 1989), the dominant approach has been to focus on the large-scale structural barriers that create exclusion from a materialist or Marxist perspective. Whilst this work has political potency, it runs the risk of homogenising disabled people and neglecting issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. This thesis provides a corrective by exploring individual, lived experiences of disability by focusing on the experiences of blind golfers.

My research builds upon the work of feminist disability authors (for example: Morris, 1991; 1996; French, 1999; Keith, 1996) who argue for revising the dominant social model approach by foregrounding the importance of subjective experiences of individual disabled people and the oppressive attitudes they face. This approach considers the different layers of disabling barriers that are not just structural or external, but operate at the everyday level of prejudice, stares and reactions towards disabled people. In this respect, my approach remains 'barrier-focused', although it does not concentrate on external, structural barriers such as physical access, labour market exclusion, state policies and so on. Social practices and relations are constituted in, and by, space (Kitchin, 1998; Lefebvre, 1991). Disability studies in geography have begun to turn their attention to the disabling nature of social space (for example: Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Chouinard, 1997; 2001; Imrie *et al*, 2001). Extending this analysis, I consider the social structuring of space – especially socio-

spatial relations, interactions and attitudes – and give particular emphasis to the agency of blind golfers. This allows for my approach to disability to shift from socio-spatial structures to socio-spatial practices and to discuss processes of inclusion and exclusion in far richer ways.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis opens with a critical review of relevant literatures on disability and sport, in relation to the debates within which this thesis was shaped. This review intends to highlight a number of gaps this project seeks to address, as well as introducing the theoretical and conceptual resources that have been drawn upon in the research. I firstly discuss the tensions between medical and social model understandings of disability. I argue that disability is socio-spatially produced, but advance an understanding of disability that does not depend upon a rigid distinction between impairment and disability. Key challenges and controversies within social model thinking are then opened up in section 2.3 where I argue that there has been a focus on socio-spatial structures at the expense of socio-spatial practices. Building upon these debates, I address the challenge of dealing with subjective experiences of disability and issues of impairment. I discuss the potential for ‘loosening up’ the distinction between impairment/disability as well as recognising the diversity among disabled people.

In section 2.4, a substantial gap is identified in the disability literatures concerned with sport. I demonstrate that there has been very little geographical work undertaken on sport and that this research has neglected disability. In so doing, I advance my understanding of the connections between sport, space and society. I argue that the social space of sport can reflect ableist attitudes and reproduce the social marginalisation and exclusion faced by disabled people more generally in society, yet also provide the context for resistance and act as a site for social change. I thus demonstrate that there is much potential for insightful work in the area of geographies of disability and sport, and studies of inclusion and exclusion. In section

2.5, I consider the significance of questions of vision and visibility in the discipline of Geography. I explore the notion of vision as embodied, partial and situated as well as the conflation between seeing and knowing, which is linked to dominant assumptions surrounding visual impairment and blindness. This thesis thus attempts to disrupt Geography's particular preoccupation with 'the visual' and hegemonic assumptions about vision and visual impairment.

Chapter three discusses ongoing methodological debates informing my research practice in this study of blind golf and explains the research design. In section 3.2 I explore significant aspects of these debates, such as how disability research should be conducted and by whom. In particular, I discuss the role of non-disabled researchers and question my involvement in disability research, as well as considering the possibilities for emancipatory disability research. Such debates pave the way for a detailed discussion of the research design, in section 3.3, where I provide information about the ways in which project data were generated, managed and analysed. In order to investigate individual, lived experiences of disability and socio-spatial practices in blind golf, the research uses participant observation at events organised by the SBGS alongside ethnographic interviews with blind players. Participant observation notes and interview transcripts were analysed using a form of discourse analysis. Three key themes emerge from that analysis and are dealt with in the substantive chapters that follow.

Chapter four – the first substantive chapter - explores barriers, especially disabling attitudes, to inclusion in golf for blind people. Influenced by the work of Tim Cresswell (1996) in particular, the chapter as a whole captures moments and events where taken-for-granted assumptions about what is 'normal' in golf are disrupted and transgressed. It begins with a discussion of organisational and personal journeys into blind golf. Section 4.2 provides an account of the history and development of Scottish Blind Golf and then I discuss the main pathways and transitions into blind golf for SBGS members in section 4.3. Accessing blind golf is by no means a straightforward process and these journeys illustrate some key difficulties that blind people face in taking up the sport. The research participants'

stories, however, are told by those who have successfully managed to challenge and resist key access barriers. Barriers to blind people's full and meaningful participation in golf do not diminish once the sport is accessed; as I argue in section 4.4, disabling barriers are embedded in the 'everyday' encounters in the golfing landscape between blind and sighted people. Although the golfers are participating in their chosen sport, this participation remains an unequal and disabling experience.

The thesis then moves from considerations of the golfers' relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf, to the inter-personal relationships between players (blind golfers) and their guides (sighted persons). The necessity of a sighted person to act as a guide is a material reality of being a blind golfer. The crux of the argument in this chapter, however, lies not with visual impairment, but the ways in which help is given and experienced. The need for a guide raises key issues surrounding independence/dependence, helper/helped and thus choice, control and autonomy for the player. As such it draws from feminist and disability debates surrounding the social relations of help. In section 5.2, I offer a typology of guides and the act of guiding. This section discusses what motivates people to guide. In section 5.3, I examine the player's perspectives and experiences of their helper/helped relationships and, in particular, I explore unequal power-relations evident in the player-guide relationship. Yet many players contend that the relationship between player and guide must be seen as a team. In section 5.4, the argument is further developed to suggest that this is an interdependent and reciprocal relationship. I conclude, however, that the notion of a team relationship does not erase unequal power relations; rather, it is a contested, multifaceted relationship where power-struggles are constantly negotiated.

In chapter six, I proceed from debates surrounding the social relations of help to consider the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape within the spaces of blind golf. Both of the preceding chapters show that disabling barriers or disabling social relations do not passively overwhelm the blind golfers. I build upon this analysis to demonstrate how the golfers actively mediate their own identities and relationships in blind golf. In section 6.1, I discuss the tensions

between the ways in which the golfers are identified by other people and institutions, and the way in which they identify themselves. Identifying, or being identified, as a 'blind golfer' is not intrinsically negative yet can be fraught with contradictions. In the following three sections, I examine the way in which identities are forged and managed in the collective arena of blind golf. I argue that the identity of 'blind golfer' is forged partly in response to the exclusionary practices of sighted golfers and partly through group formation processes. In particular, I emphasise the importance of humour to the formation of alternative, resistant identities as blind person/blind golfer. I propose that the golfers are not only defined by their blindness, but juggle multiple, contradictory and fractured identities. Blind golf is a space where particular identities are taken up, relinquished, resisted, lost, challenged and held in tension by the players. This chapter thus calls for an appreciation of the complexity of disability identities.

The thesis concludes with a discussion chapter that provides an overview of its contribution to debates concerned with geographies of disability and sport. It addresses the limitations of this project and suggests potential directions for future research. I argue that this thesis reveals a complex and contradictory story of disability in the everyday lives of blind golfers. I conclude that the approach taken in this project enables a more nuanced understanding of disabling barriers to emerge, which greatly enriches discussion of processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to disability.

2

Approaching geographies of disability

2.1 Introduction

Geographers have only recently begun researching disability. As Brendan Gleeson (1999a, p.1) states: “In Geography, the long disciplinary silence on this profound dimension of human experience is especially perplexing”. Just as feminist geographers have convincingly linked the dominance of masculinism in the production of geographical knowledge to the exclusionary treatment of female geographers and particular topics (for example: Longhurst, 1997; Rose, 1993), I consider that this ‘disciplinary silence’ is connected to the predominance of ableism in geography and geographical practices. Ableism is defined by Vera Chouinard (1997, p.380) as referring “to ideas, practices, institutions, and social relations that presume able-bodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalised, oppressed, and largely invisible ‘others’”¹. In a discipline which is overwhelming peopled by non-disabled academics (and students) and continues to presume a non-disabled norm (Imrie, 1996a), it is perhaps not surprising or ‘perplexing’ that disability has largely been neglected.

¹ Gleeson (1999a, p.27) states that contemporary disability oppression is frequently referred to as ‘ableism’, based on Chouinard’s (1995, 1997) definition, yet also notes that ‘disablism’ is regularly used as a synonym for ‘ableism’ (1999a, p.215).

Rob Imrie's (1996a, p.402) call for geography to recognise disability as one of the 'forgotten arenas' and in need of due attention as an area of study and research is, however, at last being acted upon. Over the past decade in particular, it is possible to chart significant developments such as electronic discussion groups, conference sessions and an expanding number of publications focusing on geography and disability (Cormode, 1997; Gleeson, 1999a; Park *et al*, 1998). The creation of the GEOGABLE discussion group, conference sessions on 'disability and space' at both the American Association of Geographers and the Institute of British Geographers from 1997, and also the formation of Disability and Geography International Network (DAGIN) place disability as a valid area for geographic research. For the first time since publication, the fourth edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Kitchin, 2000a p.178-180) has included an entry on geography and disability. Such developments demonstrate that this is a flourishing sub-disciplinary area and therefore not unduly neglected.

It is within this disciplinary context that my thesis is situated. This chapter critically reviews the relevant bodies of literature on disability, in relation to the debates within which this thesis was shaped. In so doing, I clarify the project's perspective as well as highlighting the current gaps it seeks to address. The first section briefly discusses the medical and social models of disability. In this context, I assert the importance of geography to conceptualisations of disability as a social issue and highlight tensions between medical and social model understandings. The second section teases out criticisms of social model perspectives that motivate my research. I also provide greater detail on theorisations of space that my line of argument regarding the disabling nature of social space is based. I contextualise the substantive focus of this thesis by reviewing literatures surrounding geography, disability and sport in the penultimate section, and then critically examine visuality and visual impairment in the last section.

2.2 Understanding Disability: a contested concept

There are ongoing debates over the way in which disability is conceptualised; in short, disability is a contested concept. Geographers have used two main theories of disability: the individual or medical model of disability and the social model of disability (Parr and Butler, 1999 p.6). The concept of disability developed by the medical model is influenced by medical definitions, where disability is regarded as an individual 'problem' resulting from a medical 'condition'; it is this personal medical 'tragedy' that restricts disabled persons from participating fully in society. As such, it is argued that disability can be 'overcome' by changing the individual to 'fit' society through, for example, rehabilitative and/or medical knowledge. Some of the earliest geographical research on disability involved mapping the distribution and rates of prevalence of bodies with particular chronic medical conditions such as schizophrenia (Giggs, 1973) or multiple sclerosis (Mayer, 1981). The language and approach used in these epidemiological mapping exercises demonstrates an understanding of disability through the lens of the medical model, especially since disability is equated with disease. This kind of geographic research places the 'problem' of disability as a medical one, rather than a social issue. This approach reveals an asocial view of impairment and such geographical studies pay little attention to the social context of disability (see Park *et al*, 1998 for a more comprehensive review of such literatures).

The theoretical stimulus to geographic studies on disability from the early 1990s, however, has largely stemmed from the social model of disability, especially drawing upon the work of Mike Oliver (1990) and others in Disability Studies (Abberley, 1987; Barnes, 1991; Barton, 1989; Morris, 1989). The medical model of disability has been widely discredited by such commentators who contend that it is the way in which society is organised that excludes disabled people. This perspective emerged from writings by disability activists that created a distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability', as defined by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976:

Impairment – Lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body.

Disability – The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus exclude them from the mainstream of social activities. (UPIAS, 1976)

The social model relies heavily upon this distinction, with many key disability scholars using the original definitions or slightly altered ones (for example Barnes, 1991 p.2; Oliver, 1996 p.22; Butler and Bowlby, 1997 p.411). 'Impairment' and 'disability' are therefore broadly mapped onto the medical and social models in this way. These definitions enable the social model to be separated out from, and be kept distinct from, the medical model of disability as the emphasis shifts from the individual impaired body to criticising society's role in 'disabling' those individuals. Put simply, it is the various barriers in society that 'disable' people with impairments and thus the social model regards disability as a form of oppression that is socially and culturally produced, rather than a natural given based on individual impairment. The social model argues for social change by highlighting, challenging and dismantling the disabling barriers and attitudes in society rather than focusing on changing the individual disabled person as a means to inclusion.

This understanding of disability has influenced geographers. For example, from a broadly materialist perspective, Gleeson (1999a) explores how socio-spatial processes can be used to disable rather than enable people with physical impairments. Imrie (1996b) considers the inaccessibility of the built environment, and using empirical evidence from both the UK and the USA demonstrates the oppressive nature of building design as contributing to the marginalisation of disabled people. Gleeson and Imrie clearly adopt a social model perspective, but additionally demonstrate the importance of geography to understandings of disability and processes of in/exclusion². In a recent journal issue of *Disability and Society*, Imrie (2000) contends that writings about disabled people often lack spatial or geographical frames of reference. The increasing number of geographers turning their attention to disability has therefore been important to advancing an

² This thesis does not simply use the term 'in/exclusion' as a shorthand for 'inclusion and exclusion'. It uses 'in/exclusion' to highlight that people are not either included or excluded, but that these processes are dynamic. 'In/exclusion' emphasises this more nuanced understanding of processes of inclusion and exclusion, which incorporates the notion that they are contested, shifting and changing.

understanding of disability as a socio-spatial phenomenon. Additionally, the work of Ruth Butler and Sophia Bowlby (1997), Ruth Butler and Hester Parr (1999), Vera Chouinard (1997), Michael Dear *et al* (1997), Isabel Dyck (1995) and Rob Kitchin (1998) have contributed to this theorisation of disability. Their work especially is drawn upon throughout the review, but my point for now is to highlight that certain geographers have used ideas from the social model to argue further that disability is spatially, as well as, socially produced. This thesis builds upon this growing body of work on geographies of disability from a social model approach that conceives of disability as socio-spatially produced.

Tensions between medical model and social model understandings are evident in Geography as the debate between Gleeson, Imrie, Butler and Reg Golledge in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* demonstrates. Golledge (1993; 1997) contends that geographers can use their specialist skills to develop navigational aids and technologies to help people with sensory impairments 'overcome' disability (other examples of geographers concerned with developing technical aids include: Jacobson and Kitchin, 1997; Kitchin *et al*, 1998). Golledge's (1993) work was heavily criticised by Butler (1994), Gleeson, (1996) and Imrie (1996a) for relying upon a positivistic and behaviouralist approach to disability related to the medical model of disability. Imrie criticises Golledge's approach as ableist and reductionist:

Golledge's (1993) article is suffused with the assumptions, values and attitudes of ableism, or that position which characterises disabled people as somehow abnormal or deviant and were the source of the problems facing people with disabilities predominantly resides in the (individual) impairment itself (Imrie, 1996a p.398).

Butler, Gleeson and Imrie oppose Golledge's viewpoint, instead suggesting that it is the social model approach that should be extended in geography to expose socio-spatial processes which produce disabling environments and thus oppress disabled people.

This debate highlights the limitations of both the dominant medical and social model approaches that rely upon a distinction between impairment and disability as

defined above. Whilst I agree with the criticisms levelled against Golledge, I do not believe that his work should be completely rejected. There are aspects of Golledge's approach that can be beneficial to disabled people. In a later collaborative research project involving Golledge (Kitchin *et al*, 1998), for example, difficulties experienced by visually impaired people in navigating the urban environment of Belfast were explored. The participants in the study acknowledged both their individual experiences of visual impairment, as well as barriers in the environment created by inaccessible urban design. It was found that orientation and mobility aids were valued by participants when traversing the urban environment of Belfast and reduced their levels of spatial confusion. Whilst technological devices can tackle certain issues of disability oppression and therefore should not be entirely dismissed, they might facilitate little if discriminatory attitudes, values and social relations remain intact (Gleeson, 1999b; Imrie, 2001; Parr and Butler, 1999). It is perhaps limiting to conceive of disability as purely social or purely biological and the most fruitful way forward could be based upon a new approach which resists this either/or scenario between the medical and social models of disability.

More recently, attempts have been made to move beyond this dualistic understanding of disability (Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Butler and Parr, 1999; Crow, 1996; French, 1993a; Morris, 1991, 1996; Thomas, 1999; Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). As Jenny Morris (1991, p.10) argues:

there is a tendency within the social model of disability to deny the experience of our own bodies, insisting that our physical differences and restrictions are *entirely* socially created. While environmental barriers and social attitudes are a crucial part of disability – and do indeed disable us – to suggest that this is all there is to it is to deny the personal experiences of physical or intellectual restrictions, of illness, of the fear of dying.

This suggests that disability is more than just socially produced and that to conceive of disability in such terms is flawed. Tom Shakespeare and Nick Watson (2001) contend that this firm distinction between (biological) impairment and (social) disability is peculiar to the British social model and suggest it is time to re-examine this UPIAS-led social model approach as *the* perspective with which to understand disability. Butler and Parr (1999) likewise suggest a more nuanced understanding with the purpose of their edited collection intended precisely to explore

interconnections between mind/body states and wider socio-cultural, economic, political and medical environments. They seek to recognise the complex interactions between biology, culture and broader socio-political circumstances. As well as understanding disability as socio-spatially produced, I advance an understanding of disability that does not depend upon such a rigid distinction between impairment and disability. I explore this issue in more depth in the following section.

My understanding of, and approach to studying, geographies of disability is influenced by current debates surrounding the social model of disability. There are a variety of perspectives and diversity of approaches within social model thinking and it would be misleading to present it as one overarching, monolithic theory. From materialist perspectives, cultural analysis, psychoanalytic accounts, feminist accounts, embodied accounts and so on, different theoretical frameworks have been utilised within the social model of disability (for more detail see Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, 1999 especially chapter four; Kitchin, 2000a; Park *et al*, 1998, Tregaskis, 2002). Despite the value of social model approaches, there are limitations (Crow, 1996). It is to these debates I now turn.

2.3 Reformulating 'the' social model approach

As John Swain, Sally French and Colin Cameron (2003) have stated more recently, there are many challenges and controversies within social model thinking. This section firstly discusses the focus on socio-spatial structures at the expense of socio-spatial practices. I then address the challenge of dealing with subjective experiences of disability and issues of impairment. Here the potential of 'loosening up' the distinction between impairment/disability as well as recognising the diversity among disabled people is explored.

Socio-spatial structures

Despite the variety of social model approaches outlined above, the dominant approach has been to focus on the large-scale, structural barriers that create exclusion

mainly from a materialist or Marxist perspective. This approach has analysed a range of economic conditions, as well as factors such as education, employment, transport and the built environment. Disability scholars such as Colin Barnes (1991) and Oliver (1990), for example, have highlighted the way economic structures of society have created disability. Oliver in particular presents a thorough account of the material and ideological changes that created dependency and disability during the rise of industrial capitalism. Gleeson (1999a, p.8) argues that “the basic historical and geographical organisation of cultural-material life shapes all social experiences, including disability”. Within this theoretical framework, he draws upon a range of historical and contemporary sources to expose the social creation of disability with a focus on the everyday lives of people with physical impairments. Whether making use of past or present examples, Gleeson’s sophisticated analysis demonstrates several key dimensions of disability oppression such as labour market exclusion, poverty, state policy, discriminatory urban design and access policies.

In a similar vein, Gerry Zarb’s (1995) edited collection aims to “draw together the evidence on the extent and causes of discrimination and disadvantage faced by disabled people, and to examine the policy options for removing barriers to disabled people’s participation in social and economic life” (Zarb, 1995 p.3). This collection thus examines disabling barriers which prevent disabled people’s full and equal participation in society. It concentrates on barriers such as the lack of access to buildings (Walker, 1995), transport systems (Heiser, 1995), education (Barton, 1995), employment (Gooding, 1995) and services (Jones, 1995). In so doing, it highlights the large-scale, material and structural barriers that exclude and marginalise disabled people.

Imrie in particular has paid attention to the physical barriers in disabled people’s lives such as the inaccessibility of the built environment, including planning and design issues (Imrie, 1996b, 1999, 2000; Imrie and Wells, 1993; see also Gleeson, 1999a). Drawing upon the important work of Iris Marion Young (1990), Imrie (1996b, p.2) argues that “people with disabilities are locked into systematic structural relations of oppression and domination constitutive of societal-wide values

and practices implicated in the (re)production of the marginal status of disabled people". His influential *Disability and The City* (1996b) covers a range of vital issues from demonstrating the nature of state policies in maintaining and perpetuating disablism in the built environment, discussing the role of architects and other design professionals in the creation of disabling environments, to the failure of access policies and programmes in redressing this socio-spatial exclusion because they simply target the symptoms rather than the underlying causes. Utilising a minority-group approach to disability, Harlan Hahn (1986) likewise demonstrates the poorly designed urban environment of Los Angeles. Hahn argues that the inaccessibility of Los Angeles impacts greatly on the geographies of disabled people since where they can and cannot go is shaped by the "design apartheid" of the urban landscape:

Although prior social movements by blacks, women and other minorities have forced environmental changes such as the removal of segregated facilities, perhaps none have been as directly involved with architectural issues as the struggle of disabled persons ... Adaptation of the built environment to the needs of disabled citizens is central to the quest for civil rights (Hahn, 1986 p.276).

The strength of these geographical studies has been the recognition of the disablist organisation of space through its physical structuring.

This theoretical and empirical work in both Disability Studies and Geography has been important, but its limitations must be addressed. Two key criticisms have emerged, both of which are influential to this study. Firstly, by emphasising wider socio-political circumstances and structural barriers that create disability oppression, other issues of disabling social relations, attitudes and interactions have been ignored. As Claire Tregaskis has argued (2000), although the dominant social model approach has acknowledged the importance of disablist attitudes in maintaining exclusion, it has still concentrated on tangible external barriers in the analysis. Chouinard (2001) has criticised geographic research for its focus on external, physical barriers, which, she argues, has perpetuated the notion that disabled people, are tragic, helpless victims of disability oppression. Secondly, the kinds of disabling barriers analysed have neglected personal experiences of disablement, the issue of differences amongst disabled people and also the role of impairment in the disabling

process. Chouinard (2001) contends that geographers should demonstrate that disabled people are a rich and diverse group, rather than passively overwhelmed by disabling barriers which also runs the risk of homogenising disabled people. Disability authors such as Gleeson and Imrie, however, have not only argued for the removal of socio-spatial structures that oppress disabled people or simply reduced disability to the 'problem' of the built environment. It is to these scholarly works that have begun to address such limitations in the following subsections that I now turn.

Socio-spatial practices

It is the feminist disability agenda in particular that has argued for revising social model approaches based on structural, materialist perspectives by foregrounding the importance of the subjective experiences of individual disabled people and the oppressive attitudes they face (Morris, 1991, 1996). This approach considers the different layers of disabling barriers that are not just structural or external barriers in the built environment, but operate at the everyday level of prejudice, stares and reactions towards disabled people. As feminist political philosopher Young (1990) argues, oppression is not performed first and foremost through formal laws and policies, but "persists in our society partly through interactive habits, unconscious assumptions and stereotypes, and group-related feelings of nervousness or aversion" (Young, 1990 p.148). According to Young group oppressions are enacted through informal reactions to others and in "conventional practices of everyday interactions and evaluation" (Young, 1990 p.148). Lois Keith (1996), for example, demonstrates the significance of everyday social encounters and interactions to her experience of disability. Using an array of examples ranging from one stranger who, without being asked, started pushing her wheelchair round a street corner, to a taxi driver who asked a personal question - 'Get very depressed do you?' - based on his assumptions about her sense of self as a wheelchair-user, Keith convinces the reader that these disabling interactions matter. Likewise French (1999) tells of her encounter with a woman who had observed her using her white-stick to navigate along a crowded street, and then folding up her stick whilst browsing books in a shop; having watched French in both situations, the

same woman approached her with hostility, challenging her behaviour. French provided her with an angry explanation or 'justification' to alleviate this ignorant reaction, after which the woman did apologise. Morris (1996, p.4) therefore suggests that an understanding is developed which makes use of "the politicisation of the personal" in order to make sense of such experiences of prejudice and discrimination. This work does little to acknowledge, however, that social practices and relations are constituted in, and by, space.

Geographic research on disability and the spatiality of social relations remains limited. On the other hand, geographers researching the spatiality of social relations often neglect disability, instead focusing on issues of gender, sexuality and 'race' in such discussions (for example: Johnston and Valentine, 1995; McDowell, 1993a, 1993b; Sibley, 1995). The work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) is useful to analyse the problematic nature of social space. Put simply, Lefebvre's central argument is that space is socially produced; space is not simply a passive container, but an active part of social relations. In drawing attention to social production and meaning of space, the use of the term 'spatiality' then is useful for reinforcing "the idea that space is thoroughly embedded in social relations rather than a mere backdrop to them" (Sharp, 1999 p.261). Drawing upon such theoretical insights, Kitchin (1998) argues that space is socially produced to exclude disabled people. For instance, extending Tim Cresswell's (1996) work, he argues that social space both keeps disabled people 'in their place' at the same time as making them feel 'out of place'. Kitchin's exploratory article on the spatialities of disability demonstrates that social relations are a key component of disabled people's experiences of social life:

An understanding of how disabled people have become marginalised and excluded within society cannot be understood without an appreciation of the socio-spatial processes that reproduce social relations (Kitchin, 1998, p.344).

This thesis argues that exploring the disabling nature of social space can usefully extend discussions over the problematic nature of social space.

Likewise, Chouinard (2001) contends that more geographic research is required on disability and the spatiality of social relations. In speaking at the American Association of Geographers Conference in New York (2001), Chouinard

reflected upon recent geographic research on disability. A core argument to her paper suggested that it is perhaps easier for us to analyse external, physical barriers than to question (perhaps our own?) attitudes, beliefs, values and assumptions towards disabled people. For me, this also meant that geographers need to explore issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. It is perhaps easier to build a ramp at the front door of a building, as a symbol of accessibility for disabled people more generally, but this may neglect the social relations *within* that space. Linked to her definition of ableism provided at the start of the chapter, Chouinard takes a broader perspective on disability that acknowledges the significance of both socio-spatial structures and socio-spatial practices with the concept of 'ableist geographies':

Ableist geographies refer to lived environments which incorporate and perpetuate physical and social barriers to the participation of disabled persons in everyday life (Chouinard, 1997 p.380).

This concept includes the "subtle and not-so-subtle reactions to disabled people that challenge their right to be, and, in particular, to be in able-bodied spaces", but does not deny the importance of a lack of automatic doors and ramps in buildings or the 'print barrier' facing visually impaired people (Chouinard, 1997 p.380).

This thesis is influenced by current debates driven by feminist disability scholars highlighted above, as well as building upon disability studies in geography that turn their attention to the social structuring of space. As Butler and Bowlby (1997, p.411) put it:

Changing the physical environment is indeed essential to improved access to public space for disabled people but so also is changing the social environment, and in particular, changing social attitudes and behaviour towards disabled people.

Using empirical evidence from in-depth interviews with visually impaired people in two English cities, Butler and Bowlby (1997) explore their experiences in moving around these cities to carry out activities such as shopping, going to the pub and so on. Their findings – similar to that of the personal experiences of Keith (1996) and French (1999) - demonstrate how attitudes and behaviour towards disabled people in public space, as well as physical structuring of these spaces, influenced their social

experiences. In another study, Butler (1998) contends that although the physical structuring of the environment can act as an apparent and direct control on the lives of disabled youths, hostile stares, remarks and reactions to their presence in public space are a significant – if not sometimes more subtle – mode of control. Taken together, these approaches recognise that social attitudes, interactions and relations within space are vital to integrate into social model theories.

A range of perspectives are evident in a special issue of *Urban Studies* (Imrie *et al*, 2001). One particularly relevant theme explored is based upon the premise that although barriers have connotations of physical space, there is also a need to discuss barriered and bounded spaces in social and imaginary ways. Imrie (2001) notes in his introduction to this collection that there are instances where “the social values and attitudes which de-value disabled people are the issue”, which leads him to argue that:

Facilitating barrier-freedom for disabled people, then, is more than providing fixtures or fittings or adapting part of a building or the wider built environment (Imrie, 2001, p.235).

In allowing approaches to disability to shift from socio-spatial structures to socio-spatial practices, this thesis discusses processes of in/exclusion in far richer ways. To extend this argument further, I move into the final subsection on reformulating ‘the’ social model, which explores debates around the subjective experience of impairment and diversity among disabled people.

Disability, impairment and difference

The dominant social model approach has also been criticised for its reliance upon a firm distinction between impairment and disability, avoiding the issue of impairment, and homogenising the experience of disability. In so doing, it has failed to acknowledge the importance of individual, lived and embodied experiences of disability, impairment and difference (Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Butler and Parr, 1999; Crow, 1996; French, 1993a; Morris, 1991, 1996; Thomas, 1999; Shakespeare, 1996a; Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). This subsection explores these criticisms.

The political significance of separating out impairment and disability, and avoiding any discussion on impaired bodies within a social model of disability cannot be denied. As Shakespeare and Watson (2001, p.11) highlight, "Part of its effectiveness arose from its simplicity. It could be reduced to a slogan: 'disabled by society not our bodies'". Liz Crow (1996) for instance, states how the argument that social barriers rather than her individual body were responsible for all her difficulties felt 'revolutionary'; it enabled her to confront the discrimination she experienced. She further explains how it "has played a central role in promoting disabled people's individual self-worth, collective identity and political organisation" (Crow, 1996, p.207). Because of this situation, Crow feels apprehensive about criticising this social model approach, yet at the same time realises its failure to capture her personal experience of disability. She contends that the unconditional focus on disability means that:

we are in danger of assuming that impairment has no part at all in determining our experiences. Instead of tackling the contradictions and complexities of our experiences head on, we have chosen in our campaigns to present impairment as irrelevant, neutral and, sometimes, positive but never, ever as the quandary it really is (Crow, 1996 p.208).

This leads Crow to conclude that it is time to renew the social model by addressing the issue of impairment through a discussion of subjective experience.

Drawing upon subjective experience, French illustrates some restrictions caused by her visual impairment such as her "inability to recognise people, being nearly blinded when the sun comes out, and not being able to read non-verbal clues or emit them correctly" (French, 1993a, p.17). This leads her to argue that not all her difficulties are completely socially produced and thus it is time to broaden the way in which disability has been presented as something that can be straightforwardly eliminated by changing society. She states that: "I believe that some of the most profound problems experienced by people with certain impairments are difficult, if not impossible, to solve by social manipulation" (French, 1993a, p.17). In challenging the rigid distinction between impairment and disability, as well as the neglect of impairment altogether by social model theorists, both Crow and French agree that a fresh approach based on subjective experience is required.

Carol Thomas (1999) rises to the challenge of dealing with such criticisms of the social model by exploring the role of what she terms 'impairment effects'. Thomas adopts a relational definition of disability, meaning that "disability is the social imposition of restrictions of activity on impaired people" (Thomas, 1999 p.42). She uses the term 'impairment effects' "when referring to the restrictions of activity which are associated with being impaired but which are not disabilities in the social relational sense" (Thomas, 1999 p.43). For example, Thomas explains that an 'impairment effect' arises from the fact that she cannot hold a spoon or a saucepan in her left hand (Thomas, 1999 p.43). Such restrictions, however, may give rise to disability if it were decided by those in positions of power that she should be denied employment or deemed unfit to be a parent because she cannot perform such actions (Thomas, 1999 p.43). Thomas thus argues that there is a need to explore the interaction between disability and 'impairment effects' in people's lives:

The lived experience of many people with impairment in society is shaped in fundamental ways by the interaction between, and the accumulative impact of, disability (or disablism) and impairment effects. However, a careful distinction needs to be made between the consequences of disability and impairment effects. The most fruitful way forward is to develop an approach which understands disability as a form of social oppression, but which finds room for examination of impairment effects (Thomas, 1999 p.156).

This kind of approach might usefully advance a reformulated social model perspective that makes room for a discussion of disability and impairment. A recognition of 'impairment effects' might ease the discontentment from authors such as Crow (1996) and French (1993a) who elaborate upon the inadequacy of the social model to capture their lived experience of impairment.

Butler and Bowlby (1997, p.415) helpfully draw parallels between the feminist movement and the disability movement in addressing the issue of impairment:

The sex-gender dichotomy has similarities with the impairment-disability dichotomy: both posit a clear distinction between biological capabilities and socially produced characteristics and inequalities.

Especially from the 1970s, feminists mobilised a distinction between sex as biological and gender as a social construction. This enabled feminists to challenge biologically deterministic explanations of gender divisions and inequality. Butler and Bowlby demonstrate that certain feminists have since challenged the sex-gender dichotomy with an approach which treats the body and society as inseparable (for example: J. Butler, 1990; Longhurst, 1997). In a similar vein, Thomas (1999 p.43) argues that disability and impairment effects cannot be crudely mapped onto a dualistic framework of 'social' (disability) and 'biological' (impairment effects). Impairment and impairment effects are not simply 'pre-social', but "shaped by the interactions of biological and social factors, and are bound up with processes of socio-cultural naming" (Thomas, 1999 p.43). These authors therefore recognise the materiality of impairment at the same time as recognising that impairments are not neutral or simply 'natural', but involve a complex interaction of bio-social processes (see also Hall, 2000). In this way, the role of impairment can be discussed without undermining the importance of a socio-spatial approach to understanding disability or reinforcing a medical model of disability that treats impairment as the 'natural' cause of disability.

As the anecdotal evidence provided by French (1993a) above highlights, visual impairment is a particularly good example of why this reformulated perspective is necessary. Firstly, as discussed above, there are 'impairment effects' associated with visual impairment that cannot be resolved by the removal of social barriers and secondly, there is potential for considerable variation in the experience of visual impairment because visual impairments are heterogeneous. Some people are short-sighted, some longsighted, some experience tunnel vision, total blindness, a visual impairment in one eye or both eyes, some visual impairments may be degenerative, acquired or congenital, some are visibly apparent others not, sunlight and darkness may affect the experience of visual impairment, some people may experience associated symptoms of pain and so on. The experience of visual impairment varies from one person to another and thus should not be presented as homogenous (see also Butler and Bowlby, 1997; French, 1993a; French, Gillman and

Swain, 1997). A focus on individual, lived experiences of disability that included the role of impairment would allow for such variations.

Linked to discussions over impairment, therefore, is the issue of multiple identities. Social model perspectives have generally not been concerned with, or open to, intersections between disability, gender, race, sexuality, class and so on, as well as the differences within these essentialist categories. As such, it has failed to recognise the importance of people's multiple identities, including those of impairment (Butler and Bowlby, 1997; see also Crow, 1996, French, 1993a, Price and Shildrick, 1998; 2002; Shakespeare, 1996a; Thomas, 1999). Social model approaches tend to homogenise the experience of disability and treat it as a singular, stable and common social identity that is given 'master' status. This has lead some disability commentators, for example Shakespeare, to argue that:

I still think it is dangerous to overlook multiple identities and to assume that disability is the sole and significant identity (Shakespeare, 1996a, p.110).

Disabled people are a diverse group, yet the dominant social model approach fails to recognise this diversity. There is much scope in writings on disability to extend this notion of disability identities as multiple and fractured (see especially chapter six; see also Peters, 1996).

Using the example of gender identities, the influential work of Judith Butler (1990) argues that feminism has made a mistake in trying to assert that 'women' were a group with common characteristics and interests. She rejects an essentialist, fixed category of 'gender' divided into clear-cut groups of men and women based on biological difference, instead asserting that identities are multiple, fractured, fluid and shifting. The notion of a 'true gender identity' is destabilised by conceptualising gender as a fabrication, "a regulatory fiction" (Butler, 1990 p.136) that is constantly created and re-created through the performative repetition of bodily acts and gestures; thus gender should be seen as a fluid variable that shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times. It is Butler's ideas around identity that are appealing to this thesis, rather than her deconstruction of gender *per se*. The key point is the idea of identity as free-floating, as opposed to being connected to an

‘essence’, which opens up possibilities for choice, difference or resistance that universalising, essentialist categorisation has previously closed down. This approach allows for a discussion of a range of subject positions that we may be marked by, or choose to emphasise, at different times, in different spaces and places and thus opens up possibilities for alternative subjectivities and multiple identities; indeed, the golfers might not identify as *only* disabled and/or blind.

Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (1998) make a useful start to applying this approach towards identity in disability studies. They attempt to demonstrate the shifting uncertainties of essentialist identities such as ‘disabled’ and non-disabled’, instead showing the mutually constitutive nature of both subject positions and the “recognition of those multiple and local differences rather than in the supposed fixity of unified categorical difference” (Price and Shildrick, 1998 p.236; see also 2002).

Writing *together* is an important aspect of this effort:

Margrit/and/Janet choose to write together – not as one, and not as two either – but as a process of fluid encounter that expresses, we hope, the nature of the ever-changing relationship between, not just us, but all those who want to get away from the straightjacket of unified identities. The very fact that we are differently embodied at this point in time encourages us to explore not only those aspects that cannot be assimilated one in the other – the radical differences that now amount of disavowal, or rights, or empathy can veil – but also the ways in which we are mutually constituted, mutually dependent for any sense of self (Price and Shildrick, 2002 p.64).

There are fears that recognising embodied differences, including the role of impairment, will undermine the political interest in maintaining a coherent, stable disability identity, where the shared experience of disability unites people with impairments. Certain disability authors, however, have convincingly argued that respecting differences amongst disabled people can only improve the disability rights movement (for example, Chouinard, 1997; Morris, 1991; Shakespeare, 1996a; Thomas, 1999). As Butler and Bowlby (1997) put it:

The importance of bodily experiences in their full diversity and social context has to be acknowledged if the disability rights movement is to progress in its fight for further equal opportunities legislation against discrimination and oppression and for full equality for disabled people (Butler and Bowlby, 1997 p.413; see also Butler and Parr, 1999).

This thesis supports the view that it is possible to revise the social model in favour of recognising, and responding to, differences amongst disabled people while maintaining solidarity against the common experience of oppression and inequality.

2.4 Geographies of disability and sport

Despite the growing literatures on disability, and intensification of debates on disability, relatively little attention has been devoted to disability sport (see also Thomas, 2003). As this section argues, there is much potential for insightful work in the area of disability and sport. Drawing upon the small number of literatures in this field, I firstly discuss geographies of sport and my understanding of sport, space and society; I then outline changing perspectives towards disability sport; and thirdly I examine studies of golf.

Sport, space and society

Very little geographical work has been undertaken on sport, although there is a substantial amount of literatures concerned with geographies of leisure (for example: Aitchison and Jordon, 1998; Aitchison, 2000; Crouch and Tomlinson, 1994; Crouch, 1999; Urry, 1999; Valentine, 1999). With so few geographers researching sport, little has been done to demonstrate how geography is central to an understanding of modern sport notwithstanding the efforts made by John Bale (1989, 1994, 2003; Bale and Philo, 1998b; see also McEwan, 2002; van Ingen, 2003). Bale's work is largely framed within a political economy approach to sport. Using examples from many sports such as athletics, boxing, cricket, cycling, football, ice hockey and golf, Bale (1989, 2003) explores issues such as the role of sport in globalisation and imperialism – although he briefly offers a discussion of 'imaginative geographies of sport' that analyses sports-regional stereotypes. Building upon work undertaken in cultural geography, other efforts by Bale have explored the cultural landscape of sport (Bale, 1994), and meanings of sports stadiums through the metaphor of 'theatre' to consider the relationship between 'audience' and 'players' (Bale, 1995). A significant context to his work is that it

highlights the neglect of sport in geography and the neglect of geography in sports studies (see also Bale and Philo, 1998a pp.5-8). Situated at this nexus, Bale's work addresses this neglect by outlining how geographical concepts of space and place are central to defining sport and understanding the significance of sport. Firstly, an emphasis is placed on the significance of space in the organisation of sport; secondly, he stresses the symbolic significance of sport-space; and thirdly, he elaborates upon the links between sport, place and politics (Bale, 2003 p.7). This thesis builds upon the sports-geographic writings of Bale, by advancing a socio-spatial analysis of blind golf, albeit offering a different perspective from Bale through its focus on socio-spatial practices.

Cathy van Ingen (2003) has drawn upon the work of Lefebvre (1991) to argue that discussion of spatiality "is often conspicuously absent" (van Ingen, 2003 p.202) from the work of sport geographers such as Bale. In her overview of research on sport and space - that largely comprises of a return to a double theme issue on sport and space in the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* in 1993 (see Puig and Ingham, 1993 for outline of issue) – she clearly demonstrates that there has been an emphasis on specific sport landscapes, with little attention given to the social relations within these places. This leads her to conclude:

Research must move past descriptive accounts of sport landscapes, abandon spatial and conceptual generalizations and begin to unpack the heterogeneity of gender, sexuality, race and other relations that characterize sports spaces as social space (van Ingen, 2003 p.212).

Van Ingen's own research explores the social space of sexual minorities in a running club in Toronto's 'gay village' in order to show how space is continually produced through gendered, sexualised and racialised geographies (van Ingen, 2003 p.211). As discussed in the above section, this thesis likewise draws upon a Lefebvorean concept of social space in order to explore ableism and ableist practices in golf.

By focusing on socio-spatial practices, this thesis addresses two substantial limitations of Bale's efforts. Firstly, and most significantly, Bale (1989, 1994, 2003; Bale and Philo, 1998b) fails to question the way in which sport presumes a non-disabled norm and thus he does not challenge the marginalisation of disabled people

in sport. This criticism, however, also applies to the work of van Ingen (2003). The exclusion of disability in the geographies of sport literatures is not surprising given the 'disciplinary silence' on disability in Geography as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. Bale's work could therefore be connected to the predominance of ableism in geographical practices. In acknowledging the mutually constitutive relationship between sport and society, DePauw (1997, p.427) emphasises the prevalence of ableism in sport and the potential for sport to challenge this:

sport (and physical activity) is socially constructed by able-bodied individuals, primarily for able-bodied individuals, while simultaneously ... sport is a site for resistance to those dominant values and a place for change in sports as well as in larger cultural and social relations.

Of course DePauw's statement fails to acknowledge the inter-relationships between sport, space and society put forth by Bale (see also McEwan, 2002; van Ingen, 2003). This thesis extends the arguments of both Bale (1994, 2003) and DePauw (1997) in order to demonstrate the ways in which sport can reflect ableist attitudes, reproduce the social marginalisation and exclusion faced by disabled people in society more generally, yet also provide the context for resistance and act as a site for social change (see also Hartmann, 2003). Sport provides an interesting arena through which to study processes of in/exclusion in relation to disability. This thesis treats blind golf as a useful analytical lens through which to understand the lived experiences of disability, as well as socio-spatial relationships and interactions associated with blind golf events.

Secondly, adapting Henning Eichberg's trialectic model of sport (Bale, 2003 p.9), Bale creates a theoretical definition of sport based on the achievement (serious sports), experiential (body culture, fun and play) and recreational (fitness and Physical Education) spaces of sport. Eichberg developed the notion of a 'trialectic' (a model demonstrating the connections between achievement sport, body experience and fitness sport – see Eichberg 1998 p.120-126 for further detail) in order to try and overcome binaries such as sport/leisure. Bale, however, chooses to focus on 'serious' sport rather than 'experiential' and 'recreational' components, stating that he is "more concerned with top-class, achievement-orientated sport rather than with sport as recreation" (Bale, 2003 p.2). Studies on disability sport have relied upon

this dichotomy between recreation and sport. In his article on the Paralympic movement, Steadward (1996, p.28), for example, distinguishes between three levels of participant objectives in sport: firstly, recreational sport and activities which are primarily for fun; secondly, competitive sport which is motivated by a personal desire to compete; and thirdly, excellence where there is an intense desire to excel in high level competition. Steadward acknowledges that all three levels are important to disability sport, but separates out elite level sport for the purposes of his analysis. I find this distinction between sport and recreation unhelpful to this particular study of blind golf. To my understanding, golf is both a recreational activity and a competitive sport; it can encompass fun at the same time as competition. Even those playing golf at the most 'basic' level can be highly competitive. This thesis is keen to explore the experiences of blind golfers at the variety of levels in which they participate in the game of golf, and recognise that 'play' can simultaneously be 'serious'.

This subsection has highlighted the current gap in writings about geographies of sport and disability which this project seeks to address. Sociological literatures on sport have done more to address issues of disability, but much remains to be done (DePauw, 1997; Sherrill and Williams, 1996). Having outlined my understanding of sport, space and society, I now move on to explore perspectives on disability sport incorporated in such studies.

Perspectives on disability sport: from therapy to rights

Disability sport developed within a medical model of disability, where sport for disabled people was treated as a rehabilitative measure to help those individuals 'overcome' their individual, medical 'problems' (Sherrill and Williams, 1996, p.44). Steadward (1996) outlines the origins of Paralympic sport, stating that it emerged from the first Stoke Mandeville Games for people with a spinal cord injury in 1948 in Aylesbury, England, a few years after Sir Ludwig Guttman created the Spinal Injuries Centre of the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1944. Disability sport began, therefore, largely from athletes with spinal cord injury encouraged by medical professionals to participate in sport as part of their rehabilitation programmes (see

also Vanlandewijk and Chappel, 1996). In her article on rehabilitation and sport at Stoke Mandeville during 1944-1956, Julie Anderson (2003) contends that this was part of government policy to rehabilitate these patients in order to regain employment and contribute to economic recovery in this post-war period (hence her title 'turned into taxpayers'). The sporting activities and games were used as a method of rehabilitative treatment for this aim rather than to develop their sporting prowess.

Over the years this sports participation extended from those with physical disabilities to include blind athletes, athletes with amputations, polio, cerebral palsy and so on, and sparked an international sports movement for disabled people (Steadward, 1996). Just as the diversity of participants changed, so too did perspectives on disability sport; disabled people contested the notion of sport for rehabilitative purposes, as an arena within which to 'overcome' their disability, and concentrated on other aspects of participation such as competition. Disabled people have challenged their marginalisation and exclusion in sport and exerted their right to participate on their terms rather than as a rehabilitative endeavour (DePauw, 1997).

Within academic debates, discussions on disabled people's access to sport has similarly moved towards a rights perspective, influenced by social model thinking, rather than conceived of simply as a rehabilitative measure (Darcy, 2003; DePauw and Gavron, 1995; Sherrill, 1986; although cf Thomas, 2003). Claudine Sherrill and Trevor Williams (1996, p.57) provide a comprehensive review of sociology of sport literatures that have explored barriers to the inclusion of disabled people in sport from a social model perspective (see also Doll-Pepper and DePauw, 1996 and DePauw, 1997 for similar reviews). Such studies have tackled structural, external barriers to participation such as inadequate equipment and facilities, lack of transportation, lack of awareness, lack of money, insufficient help/support and discrimination (Sherrill and Williams, 1996 p.57). Sherrill and Williams (1996) outline three key criticisms relevant to this study. Firstly, they criticise these studies as "largely exploratory and descriptive" (Sherrill and Williams, 1996 p.59). Secondly they claim that: "Little research has been reported on processes of

interactions, conflict, and co-operation within various contexts for individuals with disabilities” (Sherrill and Williams 1996, p.44). A final limitation highlighted by their review is that previous disability research has focused on the situation for elite level athletes; they emphasise that little is known about non-elite athletes and non-athletes with regard to affordances and barriers to participation. This thesis is well-placed to address their concerns, given its theoretical framework and aim to explore individual, lived experiences of disability by focusing on the experiences of blind golfers as well as socio-spatial practices associated with blind golf events.

The special theme issue on ‘The Sociology of Ability and Disability in Physical Activity’ in the *Sociology of Sport Journal* (Carlisle Duncan *et al*, 2001) in particular has advanced this area from a social model perspective drawing especially on the work of those in Disability Studies such as Oliver (1996) and Shakespeare (1998). To take an example from this collection, Emma Stone (2001) analyses dominant state constructions of disability and sport in contemporary China. She demonstrates that state discourses surrounding disability and sport have raised awareness about disability in China and challenged some of the negative assumptions about disability. Yet her over-riding concern is that in disability sport propaganda “disabling measures of “normal” bodies endure” (Stone, 2001 p.63). Stone thus presents an important analysis of state discourses and how they have contradictory implications for the lives of disabled sportspersons as: “new constructions of the disabled body, and higher state social expectations of disabled people might prove to be as oppressive to the many as they are potentially liberating to the few” (Stone, 2001 p.64). Her analysis links, therefore, to a social model perspective concerned with discourses surrounding disability policy and legislation, albeit in the context of sport.

Also from a social model perspective, Michael Collins (2003) dedicates a chapter in his book on sport and social exclusion to discuss the barriers to disabled people’s participation on sport. The chapter is based upon reviewing recent government legislation and policies as well as empirical studies on disability and sport. For example, he examines the barriers highlighted by Leicester City Council

with regard to their quality of leisure provision for disabled people; five major barriers were identified – transport, physical barriers, staff training, information and communications. Collins notes that despite policy commitment and investment to increase disabled people's access to leisure provision in Leicester City Council, the Council still faces substantial challenges. Thomas (2003) further highlights constraints on disabled people's participation in physical activity and sport by drawing upon a recent Health Education Authority study and also research undertaken by Sport England. The kinds of barriers Thomas (2003, p.109-110; see also Darcy, 2003) outlines from such studies include: lack of motivation and confidence, transport problems, lack of information, poor physical access, lack of disabled role models, lack of money and poor media coverage of disability sport (for specific studies on disability sport and the media see: Goggin and Newell, 2000; Hardin and Hardin, 2003). Whilst emphasising many of the important barriers associated with disability oppression in sport, authors such as Collins and Thomas present disabled people as passive victims of inequality. This project provides a corrective to this situation by stressing the agency of blind golfers as well as recognising the social barriers they face.

As I have already argued, this thesis conceives of disability as a socio-spatially produced and offers a reformulated social model perspective with a view to 'loosening up' the distinction between impairment and disability. My analysis of blind golf is therefore influenced by current debates in social model thinking. Hence, I build upon these particular sports literatures rooted in a social model perspective and advance a socio-spatial analysis of disability and sport by focusing on the experiences of blind golfers and socio-spatial practices associated with blind golf.

Golf

A limited number of golf literatures have tackled issues of social access to, and participation in, the game. Class, gender, 'race' and sexuality, however, have dominated such discussions (Crosset, 1995; George, 1997; Haig-Muir, 1998; Jamieson, 1998; Lowerson, 1994; McEwan, 2002; Senyard, 1998; Stoddart, 1990). Todd Crosset (1995), for example, provides a fascinating ethnographic account of the

experiences of women professional golfers in the setting of the Ladies' Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour. He presents a rich analysis of the complexities and contradictions of being a woman professional golfer within a sexist society and a masculinist world of golf. This is achieved by focusing on social relations and interactions within the tour such as between the golfers and their fans, the golfers and their caddies and so on; the women golfers are not simply passive recipients of sexist practices, but are shown as active agents in 'doing gender' whether that be reinforcing, resisting or transforming gender norms in golf. Crosset's approach is, therefore, very similar to my own in this project, albeit with a slightly different focus. My own previous research has shown the significance of gendered spaces and bodies in golf (McEwan, 2002). I argued that golf continues to be dominated by men and particular forms of masculinity, and can be understood to 'accommodate' women by creating distinctly gendered spaces and boundaries. For example, I elaborated upon ways in which women are marginalised and excluded from the decision-making processes in golf clubs, as well as discussing how social spaces in clubhouses are often claimed by men (such as men-only bars) and so on. I also drew upon examples where women challenged and resisted these gendered spaces and boundaries in golf.

These literatures have shown that there are inequalities in access to, and participation in, golf. Such studies on golf, however, remain limited in their failure to address the experiences of disabled golfers. In contrast, Kay Maas and Cynthia Hasbrook (2001, p.21) describe golf as 'able-bodied'. They begin their article by stating that it is non-disabled golfers who have constructed the game of golf and so disabled golfers face social barriers to their participation in the game. To support this description and statement about golf, Maas and Hasbrook draw upon the case of Casey Martin, a physically disabled professional golfer who recently challenged the Professional Golfers' Association's (PGA) refusal to allow him to use a golf cart in competitive play. They argue that the reason for Martin's lack of acceptance in professional golf is that he challenges the hegemonic masculinity rooted in the sport, which is largely based upon not being female, older or disabled (Maas and Hasbrook, 2001 p.22). Drawing upon the notion of a 'paradigm citizen' (after Wendell, 1996 cited in Maas and Hasbrook, 2001 p.22) that is non-disabled, male and young, they

further study how this ideology of a 'paradigm citizen' is reinforced, maintained and/or challenged by the mass media. In their content analysis of golf magazines, they found that golfers with visible physical disabilities were absent from advertisements and photographs and only paid scant attention within the text of articles. From these data, they argue that disabled golfers remain under-represented in the sports' media coverage. These findings lead them to conclude that:

the mass media's maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and its lack of acceptance of disability represents a lost opportunity to feature the non-paradigm citizen/golfer in normal situations and favourably change societal attitudes regarding disability and the exclusionary practices associated with it (Maas and Hasbrook, 2001 p.34).

Whilst these authors could have further questioned what is a 'normal' situation and perhaps attempted to destabilise this 'normalised' category of golfer, they offer a rare analysis of disability and golf.

Although not directly suggested by the authors, Maas and Hasbrook's findings, as well as the treatment of Casey Martin, suggest it is necessary to unpack assumptions about who and/or what makes a 'good golfer'. Crosset (1995) and McEwan (2002) have highlighted that dominant constructions of masculinity are inherent in views of what makes a 'good golfer'. Physical strength, power, aggression and competitiveness are 'masculine' traits valued in the practice of golf (Crosset, 1995; McEwan, 2002). Maas and Hasbrook (2001) highlight that people with impairments are excluded from this 'normalized' view of golfers. A 'real' golfer, a 'good' golfer, a 'normal' golfer is therefore constructed as 'non-disabled' and 'masculine'. Current golf research is influenced by these assumptions. Recent proceedings from the World Scientific Congress of Golf (Thain, 2002), for example, opens with lengthy section on 'the golfer'. This section is dominated by positivistic analyses on how to get the best out of a golf swing, golf technique and technical equipment that are preoccupied with striving for strength, power and distance in the execution of a golf shot. For instance, Reyes *et al* (2002) focus on the relationship between strength training programmes and driving distance. Other chapters on golf technique, instruction and the dynamics of the golf swing are infused with 'able-bodied' notions. For example, in developing a spatial model of the golf swing, Rees

Jones (2002) makes assumptions about the physicality of the golfer and their body movements. No consideration is given to golfers who do not 'fit' this taken-for-granted 'non-disabled' norm such as wheelchair golfers, amputee golfers and so on. As such, views of what makes a 'golfer', and a 'good golfer', are ableist and this ableism is evident in writings about the practice of golf.

That said, there has been research undertaken on the production of tactile maps for blind golfers (Gardiner and Perkins, 1996). In consultation with English Blind Golf, the project designed a tactual representation of the golf course and individual golf holes for use by blind golfers at the British Masters tournament at Patshull Park Golf Club in Shropshire in 1996 (Gardiner and Perkins, 1996). The findings from this project demonstrate the usefulness of tactile aids for visually impaired golfers, but do not tackle the disabling social interactions, relations and attitudes. Whilst this research is useful and may bring practical benefits for blind players, it neglects issues of how the blind golfers feel, or are made to feel, in the spaces of blind golf. This thesis acknowledges the significance of this work into blind golf that addresses the players' experience of the natural and physical layout of the golf course, but extends it to include the social structuring of space. As I have argued above, geographers must pay attention to the social environment as well as the physical environment in their studies of disability because it takes both dimensions to facilitate inclusion for disabled people (see also Butler and Parr, 1997; Chouinard, 2001; Imrie, 2001).

This thesis extends previous research on participation in golf to consider the experiences of access to, and participation in, golf among blind players in Scotland. In so doing, I build upon the beginnings made by Maas and Hasbrook (2001) in questioning exclusionary practices associated with disability in golf even if from different methodological perspective (see following chapter) and add to research on blind golf by analysing socio-spatial practices. I now move on to the final subsection in this chapter that discusses visibility and visual impairment.

2.5 Visuality and visual impairment

Questions about visual impairment are of particular significance in the context of geography given the privileging of vision in the production of geographical knowledge, an issue that has been explored critically by a number of cultural geographers (Cosgrove, 1985; Pocock, 1981; Rose, 1993; Smith, 1997). As Gillian Rose (1993, p.86) contends:

the visual is central to claims to geographical knowledge ... the desire for full knowledge is indicated by transparency, visibility and perception. Seeing and knowing are often conflated.

Indeed, geographical knowledges, mainly conveyed visually through maps, photography, film, GIS technologies and so on, are indicative of the visual bias in geography. This situation does not surprise Susan Smith who contends that: "Geography is, after all, a quintessentially visual enterprise, traditionally using observation as the route to knowledge, and regarding sight as the measure of truth" (Smith, 1997 p.503). Geographies of visual impairment and blindness have been sidelined by a discipline that presumes sightedness as 'the norm' and privileges vision in its claims to knowledge.

Cultural geographers have demonstrated the problematic nature of visual knowledges and contributed to debates surrounding visibility (for example: Cosgrove, 1985; Robins, 1996; Rose, 1993; 2001; Smith, 1997). Visuality is defined by Rose as "ways in which vision is constructed in various ways: 'how we see, how we are able to see, allowed or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein'" (Rose, 2001 p.6 citing Foster, 1988). For example, Denis Cosgrove (1985) has argued that the painting of Mr and Mrs Andrews by Thomas Gainsborough presents a bourgeois way of seeing the landscape. Rose (1993, p.93) takes this argument further to demonstrate how the painting of Mr and Mrs Andrews can be read in other ways; she claims that this painting depends not only on class relations, but gender relations too. Rose extends beyond what is seen or the kind of seeing invited, to the specificities of an individual's way of seeing. In this way, such geographers have convincingly argued that how people see, what is visible and what is not, and what people see is not neutral.

Although such discussions surrounding visual politics in geography have unsettled dominant constructions of 'the visual' as neutral and objective, arguing instead that visual knowledges are always saturated in social power relations, they continue to neglect other senses such as touch, smell, hearing and taste. For example, Brian Harley (1988) discusses the power relations involved in the production of maps, yet fails to consider how maps are not only 'viewed' with the eyes, but can also be read with touch if tactile publications are available. In this way, such studies have continued to privilege the visual, albeit demonstrating the problematic nature of visual knowledges. Other cultural geographers, therefore, have shifted their focus to those neglected senses as a means to displace the privileging of the visual in geographical knowledges and thus demonstrate how life experiences are shaped by senses other than sight.

A particular emphasis on music and the significance of the aural, or sonic, world has been one result of attempts to incorporate non-visual experiences in geographical studies (for example, Smith, 1994, 1997; Wood, 2002). Smith (1994) outlines a number of ways in which the visual bias associated with positivism and empiricism in social geography might be challenged if sound were more explicitly incorporated. By considering the role of music in Renaissance Italy, the place of music in industrialising Britain, and the importance of music for debates on 'race', space and civil rights in 20th century USA, Smith (1997) reinforces that the sense of hearing is as significant to the geography of cultural politics as the sense of sight. This leads Smith to conclude that "one might hope for a geography in which sound is as important as sight and hearing as valued as looking" (Smith, 1997 p.524). Such work has indeed highlighted that privileging the visual has limited understandings of how people experience space and place. Sensory geographies may therefore be critical in exploring alternative routes to knowledge through touch, smell, taste and sound (other examples of geographers involved in work on senses other than sight include Pocock, 1993; Porteous, 1985; Rodaway, 1994).

The notion of vision as embodied, partial and situated is appealing (Haraway, 1991). So too are studies that demand a more multi-sensory approach to understandings of space and place which do not rely upon a hierarchical notion of the senses. However, there are two key limitations to these debates. Firstly, discussions on vision and visibility continue to neglect visual impairment and the visual experiences of visually impaired and blind people (although see Kleege, 1999). Secondly, moving 'beyond geography's visible worlds' (Smith, 1997) perhaps entails an implicit assumption that visually impaired and blind people do not have access to 'the visual' rather than embracing the heterogeneous nature of visual impairment, with only a minority of blind people who are totally blind. For example, Smith (1997, p.503) has written that 'the visual' is "exclusive to those who can, or have once been able to, see" which reinforces the notion that 'to see' means being 'fully sighted'. Both limitations are linked to certain assumptions surrounding visual impairment and blindness. It is to these debates that I now turn.

Georgina Kleege's (1999) autobiographical account challenges and disrupts the idea that 'the visual' is only accessible to sighted people. At the beginning of her book, she discusses blindness and culture, addressing some conventional stereotypes surrounding blindness and blind people. She states (1999, p.14) that to "most people blindness means total, absolute darkness, a complete absence of any visual experience". Kleege, however, regularly attends painting exhibitions and enjoys visual arts as a blind person. At an exhibition of art works by Matisse, Kleege tells of her interaction where another attendee lifts his headphones from a tape-recorded tour-taker and tells her that she is standing too close to a painting, and has to stand further back in order to fully appreciate it. This person hurried to the next "correct vantage point" and so she:

didn't get the chance to tell him that I am blind. I suspect that it would have stopped him in his tracks. The visual arts are for the sighted, he might have told me. The idea of a blind person in a museum sounds like the punch line to a bad joke. Though, as far as he could tell, any number of his fellow earphone-wearers could have been blind. Why not? (Kleege, 1999 p.95).

Debates surrounding the vision and visuality have neglected the voices of blind people, such as Kleege, and in so doing have implicitly created a binary distinction between sighted/blind, seeing/not seeing, visual/nonvisual.

A dominant perception that persists is that blindness and sightedness are radically opposite and thus blindness is defined negatively as *not* seeing (Titchkosky, 2002 p.102-3). For example, in Keith Hetherington's (2000) study of museums and the spatial politics of access for visually impaired people, he rightly questions the museum's assumption that its objects should only be there to be *looked* at, but in so doing constructs visually impaired visitors as 'without sight'. Experiences of visually impaired and blind people are often homogenised in this way, even though they "have different degrees of vision from 'useful' vision to total blindness. Only four percent of visually disabled people have no sight at all" (French, Gillman and Swain, 1997 p.9). This links to the way in which this thesis treats visual impairments as heterogeneous and respects diversity among visually impaired people, as discussed in the second section. This hegemonic notion that blind people 'cannot see' is significant in the context of debates on visuality and the construction of knowledge because seeing and knowing are conflated.

Advancing the work of Donna Haraway (1991), Michalko (2002; also see 1999) problematises the conflation of seeing and knowing, and the role of 'objective vision' in claims to 'expert' knowledge, by making use of interactions between a 8 year old congenitally blind girl and her Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Instructor. Through a variety of examples, Michalko convincingly argues that Cheryl, the O&M instructor, embodies the notion that she possesses 'objective', 'real' knowledge about the world as a seeing/sighted subject where as Jenny, the blind girl, does not because her knowledge is "gleaned from the location of blindness" and is thus considered "defective" (Michalko, 2002 p.178). The following example of an exchange between Jenny and Cheryl is illustrative of this point:

She said that Jenny once told her that carrots were little round circles. This was wrong, according to Cheryl, and she took Jenny to a supermarket to 'see real carrots', as she put it (Michalko, 2002 p.178).

Through a rehabilitative discourse, the O&M instructor believes that she has to work on 'concept development' with Jenny because her knowledge of the world as a blind person is treated as inferior to a sighted person's knowledge of the world. Michalko challenges this understanding of blindness where the rehabilitation professional only perceives the blind person they are working with as 'lacking' in 'real knowledge':

Cheryl's work is composed of showing Jenny that her subjective knowledges are not only irrelevant, but are detrimental to the acquisition of objective (real) knowledges, knowledges that come from within sight. The interior machinery that Cheryl 'sees' in Jenny's blindness is the faulty machinery of eyesight broken by blindness (Michalko, 2002 p.182 emphasis in original).

His chapter is a welcome critique of visuality that addresses the roles of 'seeing' and 'sight' and the ways in which they come to signify a 'knowing subject' through interactions between a blind person and their sighted professional. This is a key dimension to literatures concerned with the role of 'the visual' in claims to knowledge that has previously been lacking in debates surrounding visuality in Geography. This thesis is influenced by this kind of intervention, especially in chapter five, which tackles the inter-personal relationships between players (blind golfers) and their guides (sighted persons). It is influential to my thesis as a whole, however, as I contend that the blind golfers are 'expert knowers' in their everyday lives (see especially chapter three).

2.6 Conclusion

This study makes an original contribution to debates within human geography and connects with some existing areas of research on disability, sport and visual impairment. This chapter has presented disability as a contested concept. Drawing upon existing debates in Disability Studies and Geography, the thesis argues for a more nuanced understanding of disability based upon two key influences. Firstly, I recognise the importance of geography to existing social model conceptualisations of disability and thus argue for disability to be conceived as spatially, as well as socially, produced. Secondly, I contend that a more fruitful way of understanding

disability is one which is less dependent upon a firm distinction between impairment and disability.

Geographers have addressed the oppression, exclusion and marginalisation of people with impairments by examining the disablist organisation of space through its physical structuring. Whilst this work has political potency, it runs the risk of homogenising disabled people and neglecting issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. A reformulated social model perspective is therefore offered with a view to 'loosening up' the distinction between impairment/disability and to recognise the diversity among disabled people. Alongside many feminist disability authors, geographers have argued that although economic and socio-political structures impact on the lives of disabled people, there is also a need to explore individual, lived experiences of disability. Building upon current debates, this thesis turns its attention to the social structuring of space – especially socio-spatial relations, interactions and attitudes – in the context of 'blind golf'.

This chapter has also contextualised the substantive focus of this thesis in relation to sport and visual impairment. A substantial gap has been identified in the disability literature, concerned with sport, which the thesis addresses through a socio-spatial analysis. I argued that disability literatures more generally have failed to advance understandings of disability in the context of sport whilst geographical literatures on sport have neglected disability. Sociological literatures on sport have done more to address issues of disability, yet have failed to recognise the importance of geography to understanding modern sport as well as the socio-spatial character of disability. My research is productively situated at the nexus of these scholarly works. Questions of vision and visuality are considered to be of particular significance in the context of Geography. This chapter critically explored the notion of vision as embodied, partial and situated as well as the conflation between seeing and knowing which was linked to dominant assumptions surrounding visual impairment and blindness. This thesis disrupts Geography's particular preoccupation with 'the visual' and hegemonic assumptions about vision and visual impairment. It does so by giving

emphasis to the 'local knowledges' of blind golfers and their agency as subjects who are experts in their own lives.

In order to achieve this shift from socio-spatial structures to socio-spatial practices, and to recognise the importance of individual, lived experiences of disability, impairment and difference, it is necessary to explore the subjective experiences of disabled people. In the next chapter, I describe the ways in which data were collected, managed and analysed as well as discussing existing debates over the way in which disability research should be carried out.

3

Researching blind golf

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the on-going methodological debates informing my research practice in this study of blind golf and explain the research design. I enter these debates from a background in feminist geography and awareness of feminist methodologies. Feminist critiques of 'traditional', 'scientific' research have challenged its perpetuation of 'the view from nowhere' and thus shown claims about the 'disembodied' creation of rational, universal, objective and value-free knowledge to be highly problematic (Haraway, 1991; Nast *et al*, 1994; Rose, 1993; 1997). Rather, such critiques propose that all knowledges are necessarily embodied, partial and situated. Increasingly, feminist geographers have used methodologies that legitimate subjective experience as a valid 'way of knowing' and thus attempt to unsettle 'expert' claims to knowledge (Madge *et al*, 1997). Whether deploying qualitative and/or quantitative research methods, feminist geographers have emphasised "that 'the personal' affects the way in which we do research: it influences the questions we ask, the ways in which we interpret answers to those questions, and what we do with our research results" (Madge *et al*, 1997 p.88). Central to such concerns, therefore, is recognising the social relations of research and aiming to promote social transformations through emancipatory research. The notion

of doing 'emancipatory research' is contested, but this will be dealt with further below.

Feminist and post-positivist critiques of 'objective', 'neutral' research, the (unequal) social relations of research and the potential for achieving emancipatory goals through the research process have been influential in disability research debates (for example: Chouinard, 2000; Morris, 1992). On-going debates over how disability research should be conducted have included discussions about the oppressive nature of such research, thus leaning towards emancipatory research practices as a way forward, and questioning the role of non-disabled researchers. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which engages these particular discussions to elaborate upon my approach to key issues in disability research. Although my background in feminist research has influenced this project, the disability arguments especially have pushed me to think through my position as a 'non-disabled' researcher. The crucial point is that these are *debates* and there is no single, authoritative way to engage in disability research. This chapter does not offer a straightforward answer to the complexities and uncertainties of doing disability research. The second half of the chapter provides a detailed account of my research practice, elaborating upon the ways in which project data were generated, managed and analysed. Ethical issues are embedded in the debates addressed within this chapter and so rather than offer a separate 'ethics' subsection, they are interwoven throughout my explanation of the research design. The decisions taken during the course of the research are largely an outcome of my engagement with feminist and disability research debates.

3.2 Doing disability research: ethical and political debates

In both Disability Studies and Geography there have been debates over how disability research should be carried out and by whom. In this section I delve into three key aspects of such debates. Firstly, I demonstrate criticisms levied against the way in which disability research has been conducted. Secondly, I discuss in more

depth one of these criticisms; that is the role of non-disabled people in disability research. As a result of these criticisms, some researchers have called for a new and alternative approach to doing disability research. Indeed, I argue that the critical issue is not simply about 'who' is conducting the research, but 'how' the research is being carried out. In the final subsection, I therefore explore calls for an 'emancipatory research paradigm' (Oliver, 1992).

Disability research as oppressive

Disability research has been described as 'parasitic' (Hunt, 1981 cited in Stone and Priestley, 1996) and a 'rip-off' (Oliver, 1992). Such authors have described disability research in this way because they argue that it has done little to change the circumstances of disabled people and, worse still, further contributed to their oppression, exclusion and marginalisation. As Oliver states (1992, p.105):

Disabled people have come to see research as a violation of their experience, irrelevant to their needs and as failing to improve their material circumstances and quality of life.

The much-cited critique by Paul Hunt¹ (Hunt, 1981 cited in Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, 1999 pp.213-214; Kitchin, 2000b p.26; Stone and Priestley, 1996 p.702) provides a derisive attack on academic 'expert' researchers after his own experience of being researched. Residents of Le Court Cheshire Home, which included Hunt, called upon 'independent' researchers to provide the necessary evidence that would underpin their claims for greater control over their everyday lives. Although the residents thought this research would be helpful, the researchers recommended a reworking of traditional practice, thereby 'siding' with staff and professionals rather than the disabled residents. This example demonstrates the way in which research can be used against the emancipation of disabled people.

Demonstrating his increasing dissatisfaction and disillusionment with disability research, Oliver (1992; 1997; 1999) has critically reflected upon the social relations of research production that create the above situation (i.e. where research

¹ Many disability authors use the case of the Le Court residents to signal the roots of this disenchantment with disability research (for example see Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, 1999 p.213-214).

fails to transform the lives of disabled people). His criticisms centre around three main themes: the oppressive approach to disability research, the oppressive social relations of disability research and the material relations of research production. For instance, Oliver (1999) argues that there is still a grave necessity to change the oppressive material structures of research production in order for disabled people to control the resources required to undertake disability research. As a PhD research student, I feel slightly removed from arguments over funding regimes. For example, Oliver is a Professor with a distinguished academic track record and positioned very differently in relation to debates over changing attitudes and practices in funding bodies, such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), than myself as an ESRC funded student/junior academic. I therefore wish to focus on the other two themes.

In commenting upon the national disability survey undertaken in 1986 by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), Oliver (1992) demonstrates how disability research can alienate and further oppress disabled people through its methodological and epistemological approach (see also Abberley, 1992). Grounded in medical model thinking, the OPCS asked questions such as 'Can you tell me what is wrong with you?' and 'Did you move here because of your health problem/disability?' (Oliver, 1992 p.104). Alternatively, Oliver suggests these questions should have been asked from a social model perspective like 'Can you tell me what is wrong with society?' or 'What inadequacies in your housing caused you to move here?' (Oliver, 1992 p.104). Oliver argues that the OPCS reproduced disability oppression because it failed to engage disabled people in the research process, such as consulting their organisations on how the research should be carried out or how the survey questions should have been framed and so on. It is not just positivist disability research, like the OPCS survey, that has reinforced the individual, medical model of disability and treated 'the researched' as passive subjects:

Interpretative research still has a relatively small group of powerful experts doing work on a larger number of relatively powerless research subjects. To put the matter succinctly, interpretative research is just as alienating as positivist research because what might be called 'the social relations of research production' have not changed one iota (Oliver, 1992 p.106).

The researcher-researched relationship is therefore “seen as a major reason for the alienation of disabled people from the research process” (Barnes and Mercer, 1997 p.6).

Similar arguments have emanated from scholars concerned with geographic studies on disability (Chouinard, 2000; Kitchin, 1999; Kitchin and Wilton, 2000). Chouinard (2000), for example, outlines four key criticisms of geographic research on disability and space. Firstly, she highlights the wider context of academic power and privilege in the production of knowledge within which disability researchers are situated: “the fact remains that as academics we exercise a great deal of power over what counts as knowledge, how it is created and *for whom*” (Chouinard, 2000 p.72, emphasis in original). Secondly, she argues that academics are sometimes complicit in the exploitation and marginalisation of disabled people by appropriating their life stories, yet excluding them from the research process, academic institutions, the use of research results and so on. This leads her to state that:

Such practices can arguably be seen as a violent and exploitative theft of the few resources that disabled people have in late capitalist societies: knowledge and insights about what it is like to be disabled (Chouinard, 2000 p.72).

Thirdly, she contends that although researchers have rejected claims to ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality’ associated with ‘traditional’ models of ‘scientific’ research, these practices persist in the presentation of research results which has important consequences for how such findings are interpreted and used. As the case of the Le Court Home residents highlighted above, such powerful claims to ‘objective’, ‘detached’ research can mean research findings are (mis)represented as ‘accurate’ accounts. Finally, Chouinard questions privileged and paternalistic approaches to political engagement, where academic ‘experts’ take an authoritative position to speak on behalf of the interests of disabled people (with the collective agenda being defined by academic knowledge). Chouinard (2000) highlights these themes as the key dilemmas facing geographers conducting research on disability.

What researchers have learnt from the above criticisms is to ‘take stock’ of how their various research projects have been undertaken and seek a fresh approach

(Barnes and Mercer, 1997; Kitchin, 1999; Kitchin *et al*, 2000; Oliver *et al*, 1992; Rioux and Bach, 1994). Oliver (1992; 1997) for example, has called for disability researchers to develop an 'emancipatory research paradigm' that is strongly linked to the theoretical foundations of the social model described in chapter two. This emancipatory approach to disability research is discussed in the final subsection. For now, I want to follow up on Emma Stone and Mark Priestley's assertion that such reflections are of "heightened significance" (1996, p.699) to non-disabled researchers, emphasising that "the inherent power relationship between the researcher and the researched is accentuated by the unequal power relationship which exists between disabled people and non-disabled people in the wider world" (1996, p.700; see also Kitchin, 1999). Assertions like this have stimulated me to critically reflect upon my position as a sighted person who was conducting research on visual impairment and blindness.

Non-disabled researchers and disability research

When writing my research proposal, Fran Branfield (1998) prompted me to question whether non-disabled researchers should be involved in conducting research on disability at all. Branfield characterised the growing and emergent field of Disability Studies in academia as being colonised by non-disabled academics. She argues that as disability research grows, it needs to be undertaken by "those of us who experience the day-to-day realities of 'non-disabled' people's oppressive stance towards us" (Branfield, 1998 p.144). This was a strong warning to non-disabled researchers who are conceived here as academic 'tourists'² who use disabled people's experiences to advance their own careers. Admittedly her comments are largely concerned with jobs in Disability Studies as opposed to doctoral research, but I felt that from the very beginning of my research, I was entering an ethical minefield that called into question whether I should be researching my chosen topic at all because of my non-disabled status. Given the tone of Branfield's comments, coupled

² Liz Bondi's (1990) article on the relationship between postmodernism, feminism and Geography put the notion of academic 'tourism' into wider circulation within this discipline. She used this term to criticise the way in which women's issues and feminism could be assimilated and appropriated by (male) geographers using postmodernism to 'recover' and 'collect' gender as a category without any fundamental challenge to the silencing and marginalisation of these issues and perspectives from 'radical' or mainstream Geography.

with the criticisms over disability research discussed above, I felt the need to engage with these debates.

Although Branfield (1998) claims that only disabled people should research disability, I consider the social relations of research production – especially the power-relations between the researcher and the researched – to be more complicated than she implies. Branfield presents ‘non-disabled’ as a single, unified, stable and coherent identity:

‘Non-disabled’ people, no matter how ‘sincere’, ‘sympathetic’ or whatever, are always in the position of being ‘non-disabled’ people and all that this carries with it – domination, oppression and appropriation (Branfield, 1998 p.143).

In so doing, she creates a rigid distinction between disabled/nondisabled people and suggests that this is *the* most important power-relation to consider in research relationships. Not only does this further homogenise the experience of disability, but it presumes that non-disabled researchers will always be non-disabled, which implies the notion that ‘ablebodiedness’ is in some way ‘untouchable’. This view of disabled/nondisabled identities is misleading, over-simplified and therefore raises a number of questions (see also Price and Shildrick, 1998; 2002). For example, what if I became disabled during the course of the research? Would that all of a sudden dissolve the ethics of whether I should be involved in disability research and legitimate me to write about the lives of blind golfers? What if I acquired Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) or Multiple Sclerosis (MS) or a hearing impairment, how much closer would I be to the experiences of a blind golfer? Can, and should, only blind people research blind people, physically impaired people research physically impaired people and so on?

Parallels can be made here with feminism, where initially the experience of women was treated as universal rather than recognising differences amongst women. Feminist standpoint theory, for example, was used by pioneering feminist geographers to focus on the experience of women, implying the notion of a single female experience (see McDowell, 1993a). This meant, of course, that female researchers could argue that women were best placed to research other women due to

this commonality of experience (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983). This view was rightly criticised for ignoring the differences that cut across the category 'woman' such as disability, 'race', class, sexuality, etc. and of course the differences within these groups. Melissa Gilbert (1994) for example disputes the assumption that as a woman researching other women's lives, this would provide her with 'inside' knowledge – *a woman's perspective*. Rather, she demonstrates how her lived experiences were in fact very different from the women she interviewed due to a number of variations in their biographies. Feminism has been further criticised by disabled women for marginalising and excluding their experiences (Morris, 1996). For example, Chouinard (Chouinard and Grant, 1995) has challenged feminist geography for the silencing and exclusion of disabled women's experiences. Feminist disability researchers have drawn attention to the problems of universalising the experiences of women, as well as universalising the experiences of disability (for example see Thomas, 1999). The argument I am developing regarding the issue of non-disabled researchers links, of course, to the problems associated with homogenising the experience of disability outlined in chapter two.

These arguments support and recognise the notion that identities are multiple, fluid, unstable and mutually constitutive (J. Butler, 1990; Bondi *et al*, 2002). In her chapter on positionality, Ruth Butler (2001) is influenced by such writings that recognise multiple positions, differences and power-relations between the researcher and the researched. This leads her to question why she chose to open her PhD with the sentence, "I was born with a visual impairment" (Butler, 2001 p.264). She further explains:

When working on visually impaired people's experiences, there seemed to be a need to make clear my own impairment, but why that was so sometimes escapes me. ... The people I have worked with have come from a wide range of social, economic and political backgrounds, but I have not in any publication stated my age, religion, class, sexuality or numerous other characteristics. ... Is my impairment the most important element of my persona to note when working with other with other visually impaired people? Are power-relations between researchers and those they research too complex, working on too many different levels, to cover in any detail even in a lengthy thesis? (Butler, 2001 p.264).

Butler does not intend to offer any authoritative answer to these questions, but I certainly agree with the way she questions placing her status as a visually impaired person as the most important and defining characteristic to her identity. This is not to deny the importance of thinking through the power relations imbued in disability research by a *non-disabled* researcher, but to argue that they are more complicated than this. I expect the relationships between myself and the participants involved in my study to demonstrate both connections and differences between us because people occupy multiple, shifting, changing, and contradictory positions.

In a similar vein, Chouinard (2000) reflects upon the social relations of research. She acknowledges how she is in some ways more privileged than other disabled women, especially through her position as an academic and, therefore, that her status as a disabled researcher does not simply place her in a position in which power relations between the researcher and the researched are equalised:

Even if the researcher is disabled, their particular, situated experiences of disability are not sufficient to enable them to speak for disabled persons more generally or negate their privilege of position as an academic researcher (albeit probably one at the margins of academic power)" (Chouinard, 2000 p.73).

Her position as an *academic* researcher is, therefore, a critical axis of power in the social relations of research production (see also Oliver, 1999). As Barnes also writes, being a disabled person does not automatically give him a closeness with all disabled people, for the "cultural gulf between researchers and the researched has as much to do with social indicators like class, education, employment and general life experiences as with impairments" (Barnes, 1992 p.122).

In my approach to researching blind golf, therefore, I believed there were complex relationships between those I was going to be researching and myself. The classed, gendered, racialised, nondisabled, aged, academic researcher 'me' are *all* important aspects that could influence the research process in some (not always known) ways. Indeed, the prospective participants in the research might not only discuss their lives as disabled people; they may discuss their identities in multiple, fractured and fluid ways as blind golfers, husbands, partners, fathers, employees etc.

and thereby demonstrate that they constantly juggle multiple aspects to their identity rather than only defining themselves as disabled. Furthermore, they may define me not only as a sighted researcher or a sighted golfer, but also as a young married woman, an amateur golfer with a three handicap, a friend, a volunteer guide and so on. The research project had to be open to these different scenarios as well as the possibility that the golfers may not even define themselves as disabled people. For example, in his article on disabled people's notions of self-identity, Nick Watson (2002) found that many of his disabled research participants did not see themselves as disabled or identify as disabled people.

For the reasons discussed thus far, I rejected Branfield's (1998) claim that only disabled people should research disability. Both disabled *and* non-disabled academics, therefore, need a reflexive awareness of the unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched. This should not assume, however, that the position(s) of the researcher and their relationship to the researched can be fully understood. Alternatively, in thinking critically about the spaces between researcher and the researched, Rose suggests that there "is also a much more fragmented space, webbed across gaps in understanding, saturated with power, but also, paradoxically, with uncertainty: a fragile and fluid net of connections and gulfs" (Rose, 1997 p.315). In the context of my own research, I considered the social relations of research to be fraught with complex webs of power that are neither fully resolvable or knowable.

What may be more important than the disabled or non-disabled status of researchers, therefore, is the perspective and commitment of the researcher and the way in which disability research is carried out. Chouinard (2000) argues that it is more important that disability research, whether conducted by disabled or non-disabled researchers, enacts emancipatory research practices and use research in ways that further participants' empowerment. Indeed, as Barnes (1992, p.121) concludes, he is not convinced that researchers must have an impairment in order to conduct "good qualitative research within the emancipatory model". Likewise, although Stone and Priestley (1996, p.708) were initially concerned with their status

as non-disabled researchers, they realised that “disability status alone does not guarantee emancipatory research”. Yet what do these authors mean by “emancipatory research” and research that “empowers”? And is this achievable? It is these questions over research practice to which I now turn.

Emancipatory disability research

As discussed in the first subsection, criticisms of disability research have led to calls for a new research paradigm (Barnes and Mercer, 1997; Oliver *et al*, 1992; Rioux and Bach, 1994). This reformulated view of researching disability is based upon an emancipatory model of doing research which aims to overturn existing social relations of research production and link with the theoretical basis of the social model of disability (Barnes, 1992; Oliver, 1992; Morris, 1992). Oliver (1992, p.110) defines emancipatory research as “about the facilitating of a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever level it occurs”. This approach called for open partisanship and a political commitment to disability rights, rather than a concern with the medical model of disability. Reciprocity, gain and empowerment were also central to this new research paradigm, as Oliver (1992, p.111) adds that social change will be achieved “through the empowerment of research subjects and the main technique for empowerment will be the encouragement of reciprocity”. He contends that empowerment is not something that can be given, but something that individuals must do for themselves:

The issue then for the emancipatory research paradigm is not how to empower people, but, once people have decided to empower themselves, precisely what research can then do to facilitate this process ... researchers have to learn how to put their knowledge and skills at the disposal of their research subjects, for them to use in whatever ways they choose (Oliver, 1992 p.111).

Such strategies hope to change the social relations of production, and place disabled people in more control of the research through every stage from design to dissemination. In short, the term ‘emancipatory’ is used to describe research that seeks social change for disabled people, such as the removal of disabling barriers, and ‘empowering’ refers to those strategies that seek to include the individual through participation (Kitchin, 2000b). Since 1992, there has been much discussion

over the emancipatory paradigm that Oliver in particular called for, including the emergence of criticisms of it.

Stone and Priestley (1996) review six core principles of this emancipatory research paradigm and question their own ability to enact emancipatory and empowering research strategies which propose to turn 'parasites' into 'partners'. To summarise these principles (see Stone and Priestley, 1996 p.706): firstly, that the emancipatory research paradigm should be based upon a social model of disability; secondly, that claims to objectivity are relinquished in favour of openly partisan research committed to the disability movement; thirdly, only research that will benefit disabled people practically and/or contribute to the removal of disabling barriers should be conducted; fourthly, the research should overturn hierarchical social relations of research production by placing disabled people in control of the research at all stages; fifthly, personal, individual experiences should be recognised as well as the collective experience of disability; and finally, both qualitative and quantitative methods should be favoured equally within the emancipatory framework of doing disability research. Stone and Priestley, however, found these principles difficult to implement in relation to their own research projects.

For example, in attempting to relinquish control over the research, as principle four suggests, Stone and Priestley (1996, p.709) were led to question "under the control of which disabled people?" For Priestley (1996, p.710) in particular, devolving power to the local organisation he was working with and placing his research skills at their disposal was not straightforward because it still meant that some research participants could be marginalised. The problem here is the assumption that there is one standpoint - which links to the above subsection - and a single agenda amongst disabled people. If researchers are to decide whose 'side' they are on this assumes that disabled people are a unified group of people who share the same agenda. Chapter two, for example, argued that the social model of disability has focused its attention on particular kinds of barriers, and neglected other barriers and perspectives as a result. I outlined the concerns of feminist disability authors who believed that the disability rights movement could be strengthened if it tackles

disabling social relations, interactions and attitudes as well as issues of disability, impairment and difference (for example, Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Morris, 1991). If there is no single agenda and no single standpoint, but multiple agendas and multiple perspectives, then methodological dilemmas - such as questioning 'under the control of which disabled people?' or 'emancipation and empowerment for whom?' - will persist.

The emancipatory paradigm, therefore, raises some methodological difficulties. Oliver (1997) himself has conceded that there are problems with emancipatory research. He provides critical reflections on the way in which research was undertaken for his jointly authored book with Jane Campbell (Campbell and Oliver, 1996), especially around whether the research successfully changed the social relations of production or has contributed to the emancipation of disabled people. For example, Oliver (1997, p.19) reflects that:

While we wanted the work to be an integral part of the collective movement of disabled people, rather than an external commentary on it, we neither had the time, energy or money to make it a wholly collective production.

Oliver contends that they were partially successful in achieving more equal relations between the researcher and the researched, but were only able to make a small contribution to the emancipation of disabled people. More recently, Oliver (1999) has suggested that even the most committed researchers cannot do emancipatory research because of the oppressive discourse on which it is based.

Geographers researching disability have likewise signalled the importance of emancipatory and political approaches to their respective research projects - as noted in the first subsection. But how to successfully implement them is still being explored (Kitchin *et al*, 2000). Kitchin (2001), for example, explores the usefulness of participatory action research (PAR) as a means to implement an emancipatory and empowering approach to disability research. Based on his experiences of using PAR, Kitchin argues that none of his projects ran smoothly. The problems Kitchin articulates included participants being reluctant to fully commit themselves to a project due to the time involved, lack of confidence and so on; the lengthy time for funding to be secured and subsequent loss of interest; the difficulty in sustaining

networks, especially if people move through employment and so on; and insufficient resources from people, time and money. Kitchin (2001, p.5-6) states that:

All three projects then slipped from being PAR projects to semi-PAR status. The disabled people were involved in setting-up the projects and did the share of data collection, but analysis and writing-up has largely been left to myself ... As a consequence, whilst the projects alluded towards equal partnership, they have to varying degrees been directed by myself.

These experiences lead Kitchin to conclude that despite the rhetoric surrounding participatory and emancipatory disability research, it is difficult to find participants who are willing and able to contribute to a full PAR project (Kitchin, 2001 p.6). He thus states that the most practical way forward is one of consultation, although this still does not resolve other issues such as consulting with which disabled individuals?

The uncertainties over doing emancipatory research do not simply rest with some of the more practical methodological considerations outlined above. Shakespeare (1996b, p.118; see also Shakespeare, 1997) more directly criticises the notion of emancipatory research:

I have major reservations with the concept of emancipatory research, even while admiring the motivation and commitment of those engaged in it. I am cynical about the possibility of research achieving major change, whether it be radical and emancipatory, or traditional social policy research. Ideas clearly have a role, but actions decide the day, and while it is possible to make the research process more balanced, grandiose claims for its revolutionary potential seem to me to be over-optimistic.

I agree with Shakespeare's criticisms here; I do not claim that this PhD can overturn disability discrimination against blind people in golf, nor do I believe it is possible to undertake research that is fully emancipatory and empowering as discussed above. I do believe, however, that this project supports a particular interpretation of the social model of disability, and is committed to trying to equalise researcher-researched relationships – as far as possible – so that participants feel informed and active in the research process, rather than passive subjects. I remain open to placing my skills and resources to be used in certain ways, by the SBGS and individual members of the SBGS, which might advance very modest emancipatory processes.

Since I have concluded that it is not only about who you are, but what you do and how you do it, and asserted that how research is undertaken is far from a straightforward process with many methodological issues remaining unresolved (or unresolvable?), what follows is an account of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the project. The emancipatory approach to disability research does not adequately second-guess all the potential ethical problems a research project may throw up, so the following account also deals with further dilemmas faced by an *ethnographic* approach. The debates associated with doing disability research clearly shaped the way in which this project was conducted and so I now turn to the decisions I made in practice.

3.3 Research design

The project aims to explore experiences of access to, and participation in, golf among blind players in Scotland and in so doing examines processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to disability in the game of golf. As discussed in chapter two, the social model of disability is dominated by Marxist, materialist analyses that have examined structural barriers that create exclusion. I argued that this dominant social model approach runs of the risk of homogenising the experience of disability and neglecting issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. Although economic and socio-political structures impact on the lives of disabled people, there is also a need to explore individual, lived experiences of disability. This thesis provides a corrective to this situation and thus the study was set up to give emphasis to the agency of blind golfers and consider the social structuring of space – especially socio-spatial relations, interactions and attitudes. It recognises the importance of individual, lived experiences of disability, impairment and difference by focusing on the subjective experiences of blind golfers.

Theory, methodology and practice are inter-connected (Kitchin and Tate, 2000 p.1) and thus to address my research aims, it is important to develop an appropriate research design. I decided that a qualitative methodology was best suited to my theoretical framework because qualitative methodologies enable the researcher to legitimate and explore personal, subjective experience and recognise the richness

and complexity of social life (Dwyer and Limb, 2001; Madge *et al*, 1997 p.92). Qualitative methodologies in human geography have partly been driven by postpositivist critiques of 'traditional', 'scientific' research (Madge *et al*, 1997; Nast *et al*, 1994; Smith, 2000). My selection of a qualitative approach is therefore connected to the methodological debates discussed in section 3.2, which rejected the notion of 'objective', 'value-free' research and favoured attempts to unsettle 'expert' claims to knowledge in research and question unequal social relations in the research. The project is influenced by the notion of 'situated knowledges' rather than the pursuit of an 'objective' or 'universal truth' (Haraway, 1991; Rose, 1997), and so it required a research design that was sensitive to providing contextualised data that encapsulated (multiple and varied) perspectives.

Qualitative methodologies use intensive research techniques that aim to uncover and interpret the meanings that people attach to their everyday lives (Eyles, 1988; Winchester, 2000). As Susan Smith (2000, p.660) articulates, qualitative methods:

are concerned with how the world is viewed, experienced and constructed by social actors. They provide access to the motives, aspirations and power relationships for how places, people, and events are made and represented (Smith, 2000 p.660).

I used qualitative methods, therefore, to place the research participants as knowledgeable agents, or 'expert knowers' in their everyday lives and to elucidate in-depth material on their individual experiences of blind golf and the socio-spatial practices shaping these experiences (see also Dwyer and Limb, 2001). The best way to access and investigate lived experience in this study were methods that allowed observation, interaction and participation in golfing activities (Eyles, 1988). I explain my choice of an ethnographic approach, however, in the following subsection.

Ethnographic approach

It has been argued that "ethnography is a uniquely useful method for uncovering the *processes* and *meanings* that undergrid sociospatial life" (Herbert, 2000 p.550, emphasis in original). An ethnographic approach clearly complements the project's theoretical framework, but is also relevant because it aims to enable

direct observation of social practices in the context of the participants' everyday, lived experiences (Cook, 1997 p.127), rather than only working with accounts of practice from, say, an individual interview or novel. Ethnographic methods were suitable, therefore, because they enabled me to focus on the lived experiences of the blind golfers, and actions and interactions could be captured directly within the setting of blind golf. Ethnography is a multi-method research tool that can include methods such as observational fieldwork, archival analysis, interviewing, filming, photography, focus groups and so on (for more detail see for example Atkinson *et al*, 2001). The intention is to gather rich, detailed material from a period of intensive fieldwork that often uses a combination of these methods, although participant observation is the core method of ethnography (Atkinson *et al*, 2001; Cook, 1997; Davies, 1999). An ethnographic approach based on methods of participant observation at events organised by the SBGS and ethnographic interviews with blind golfers was chosen because it enabled the players' personal narratives and experiences to be explored as well as socio-spatial relationships and interactions associated with blind golf events.

Participant observation involves establishing a place in a particular situation on a relatively long-term basis in order to observe, participate and engage with the social lives of the participants in that setting (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). Ian Cook (1997, p.127) writes:

it involves researchers moving between *participating in* a community – by deliberately immersing themselves in its everyday rhythms and routines, developing relationships with people who can show and tell them what is 'going on' there, and writing accounts of how these relationships developed and what was learned from them – and *observing* a community – by sitting back and watching activities which unfold in front of their eyes, recording impressions of these activities in field notes, drawings, photographs and other forms of material evidence (emphasis his own).

Participant observation was placed at the core of my research design to engage the participants in their everyday lives. It allowed me to observe, listen and enquire about certain aspects of the participants' lives and record encounters, actions and interactions in the spaces of blind golf. In addition to these more direct observational and participatory experiences, I chose to conduct ethnographic interviews because it

would enable a one-to-one, personal account of these actions and interactions associated with blind golf events. Ethnographic interviews are usually in-depth interviews conducted following a period of observational fieldwork and therefore after the researcher has already established an on-going relationship with the interviewee (Sherman Heyl, 2001). These would provide the golfer's own reflections upon their lived experiences - to hear from participants directly how they interpret their experiences (Sherman Hely, 2001) - in addition to contextualised accounts and observations at SBGS events.

Because participant observation is a key method in this project, I needed to identify a way in which I could participate. I choose to attend a season of tournaments and related events organised for people who play blind golf. Participating in a blind golf season meant working with an organisation that organised such events. I was already a volunteer guide for members of the East District of the Society and had been for two golf seasons before starting the research. Since I was already a volunteer within such an organisation, I choose SBGS events to conduct the research. It meant that I already had contacts within the sport and was familiar with the organisation of blind golf in Scotland. The SBGS organises blind golf competitions locally, nationally and internationally, which could provide many opportunities for participant observation. As an organisation of, and for, blind golfers, the SBGS also represents the largest concentration of blind golfers in Scotland. The SBGS therefore provided a unique opportunity to gain personal accounts of, and observations about, blind people's experiences of participation in golf. I also felt my own position as a golfer who has played at many courses across Scotland created a useful familiarity with the sport and its venues as well as aiding the process of building rapport, which I discuss further in the following section.

Making contact as a 'researcher'

Because I was already a volunteer with the SBGS, I needed to consider the advantages and disadvantages of seeking to use the same organisation for research purposes and the (lack of) alternatives. Although I realised the potential benefits that my guide and golfer identities might have in building rapport, I also felt my guide

status in particular posed certain problems. The process of gaining access meant juggling my fears and anxieties about my on-going relationship with the SBGS and the golfers for whom I guided. I thought carefully, therefore, about how to approach the SBGS for permission to do the research. First and foremost, I decided it was important ensure that the SBGS, and particularly those I already knew in the East District, realised that the research emerged from my time spent volunteering and that I did not become a guide only to do a PhD. Secondly, I wanted to discuss permission to do the research in a way that enabled the potential participants and the organisation to say 'no' (Dwyer and Limb, 2001 p.12).

At this stage, however, I was fearful of rejection for I was worried this may negatively impact on my future role as a guide. I was also aware that the SBGS had a problem with the recruitment and retention of guides and so I did not want them to feel obliged to say 'yes' because of my guide status. I decided to make it clear to those concerned that saying 'yes' or 'no', or changing their answer at any stage throughout the research, would not impact on my relationship with the SBGS as a guide; in short, I would not stop guiding if they said 'no'. What actually happened, however, was that during my time spent as a participant observer I began guiding even more and proved a useful resource to the SBGS in this way. I did not intend to negotiate access to study blind golf only in the role of a guide, indeed I occupied multiple roles as an ethnographer (see following subsection), but after attending a few events where I was not guiding, the golfers very quickly made sure they used me more frequently as a guide. This was also a way in which we could develop a mutually beneficial relationship and so I was happy to place my guiding/golfer skills at their disposal. This decision links directly to the methodological debates over the social relations of research production discussed in the previous section.

Ethnographers usually negotiate access through a network of gatekeepers, which means approaching several different people in different positions who may or may not be known to the researcher (Cook, 1997; Fielding, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1994). As Carol Bailey (1996, p.50) indicates, it is desirable to seek permission from both formal and informal gatekeepers because it is insufficient to

presume that someone from the 'top' of an organisation can speak on behalf of everyone at every level. I decided to undertake the research as 'overtly' as possible (cf Crang, 1994; Humphreys, 1970; Wilton, 2000) and so explicit permission was sought from gatekeepers at different levels, including the SBGS as an organisation and also with participants. Yet I place the term overtly in inverted commas as a conscious effort to signal the impossibility of adopting a totally overt position as an ethnographer – and thus the difficulties over 'informed consent' and permission being granted with everyone - but I will explore this further below. Having thought carefully about my anxieties and how to gain access, I needed to negotiate permission to conduct the research that was sensitive to my position as volunteer guide as well as negotiate access through a network of gatekeepers that made use of existing personal contacts.

I contacted an SBGS member of the East District first because I had known him since I started in blind golf as a guide and he had been a member of the SBGS for a reasonable period of time. This meant that I was familiar to him and he was familiar with many other people in blind golf. This initial contact was a telephone call rather than a written letter because the telephone was a more accessible medium than print for this SBGS member. As the print barrier remains a significant, disabling barrier in the lives of many visually impaired and blind people, I decided this form of contact was best avoided. Although introductory letters and follow-up written confirmation is conventional research practice, this was potentially disabling to many of the golfers. So I telephoned this SBGS member to discuss the project, how I intended to do the research, my initial concerns and to ensure that I would continue as a guide regardless of whether the SBGS and members granted permission or not. His advice and feedback was both positive and encouraging. Immediately, he recommended a list of people I should talk to and why, such as those involved with blind golf from the formation of the SBGS, to former Captains, new members and so on. He specifically suggested I contact the (then) Captain of the SBGS. I was pleased that this initial contact went well and it made me feel more relaxed about contacting the SBGS to 'officially' seek permission to do the research.

I contacted the Captain of the SBGS explaining who I was, how I got his phone number and why I was phoning. Again, a conscious decision was made to make telephone contact rather than a written introductory letter for the reason stated above. I highlighted my role as a guide in the East District because I felt this would signal that I was someone already connected to blind golf and with a genuine interest in the sport. I stated that I was seeking permission from the SBGS to conduct this project and keen to set up a meeting in order to gain feedback from him at this early stage. He responded positively and we arranged a meeting at a convenient time and place to him. At our meeting I further asked what he thought the key issues that needed to be given consideration in the research were, whom I should speak with both in the SBGS and also outwith blind golf. I also explained how I intended to do the research – by observing at, and writing about, SBGS events throughout the golf season as well as conducting one-to-one interviews with a small number of SBGS members later in the year. He was supportive of my approach and provided me with a list of SBGS events, highlighting certain events that he considered I should try and attend. This served to enrich the research design by gaining ‘expert’ advice and input at this stage, as well as part of my decision to actively involve the SBGS in the research process.

As suspected, my guide and golfer aspects to my identity were both significant here. I immediately struck a good rapport with the Captain; it seemed significant that I had contacted him on recommendation from another SBGS member and that I was a guide. He even joked at one point during the initial contact phone call that he might “steal” me for a guide at some event! It was not only my status as a guide, however, that contributed to rapport-building; my identity as a golfer was also important. For instance, when he gave me a list of SBGS golf events and the golf courses hosting them, we shared golf experiences at these courses, opinions of them and so on. He seemed especially interested that I was “more than just a guide”, but a golfer too. Taken together, my involvement in blind golf gave us mutual contacts and my golfing pursuits more generally provided us with a talking point other than blind golf; they enabled a firm basis for a good research relationship to develop with the SBGS and as I elaborate upon below, with other participants too.

Whilst keen to develop rapport and forge a 'good research relationship', I was also aware of potential ethical pitfalls with this approach. In her discussion of ethnographic research, Judith Stacey (1988) warns ethnographers that developing closer, more empathetic researcher-researched relationships, and emphasising particular connections, may mask "a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation" (Stacey, 1988 p.24). She argues that these kinds of relationships can create more subtle opportunities for manipulation, and thus researchers should always recognise the inequalities in their relationship with research participants, especially since they hold the privileged position of 'researcher'. Moreover, the fact that this method is engaging people in their everyday lives may open up possibilities for exploitation:

Precisely because ethnographic research depends upon human relationship, engagement and attachment, it places research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer (Stacey, 1988 p.22-23).

Although disability literatures surrounding emancipatory research methods may advocate building closer, more equal relationships between the researcher and the researched, I also chose to maintain an element of distance and emphasise my position as a researcher rather than overemphasise my guide/golfer identities.

The debates over covert and overt ways of doing ethnographic research are discussed at large in research literatures (Fielding, 2001 pp.149-151; Homan and Bulmer, 1982; Holdaway, 1982; Humphreys, 1970; Murphy and Dingwall, 2001; Parr, 2001; Warwick, 1982). Rob Wilton (2000) for example, defends his use of deception and elements of covert ethnography as a 'means to an ends' in research that aimed to understand more about why people organised to oppose the location of group home and service facilities for people with mental disabilities, alcohol and drug addictions. Although it was clear to the opponents that they were participating in a research study, Wilton disguised that his motivation was to understand why *they* chose to oppose and exclude those 'other' groups. He felt that his "own commitment to social justice for people with disabilities, and a belief that community opposition is motivated by negative stereotypes of disability and difference, justified this approach" (Wilton, 2000 p.95). In a more extreme form of covert ethnography, Laud Humphreys (1970) justified his study of gay men through layers of deception

because he had preserved their anonymity and presented a sympathetic portrayal of their lives that challenged societal myths and stereotypes surrounding homosexuality. His defence was largely based, therefore, on the premise that his methods had not caused harm to his participants. I decided that there was little need or justification for 'covert' ethnographic methods in my project, and thus felt it was important to be as open as possible about my research with all those involved in blind golf.

I tried to explain, therefore, to as many golfers and guides as possible - especially in the first few events I attended - that I was not only a guide, but someone conducting research on blind golf for the main purpose of a postgraduate qualification. The fact that I was only really known to golfers and guides in the East District as opposed to throughout all the Districts was helpful. In being introduced and meeting with other golfers and guides for the first time, it gave me an excellent opportunity to 'expose' my researcher identity. The members I already knew would also explain to other members that I had been guiding in the East District for some time, but was travelling to more events throughout Scotland for the main purpose of doing research. Within a reasonably small organisation of around fifty SBGS members and their respective guides, the word spread quickly that 'a woman called Shonagh' was doing research on blind golf. After a few different events, I had met practically every member. I was always pleased to hear golfers or guides say, 'Oh you're Shonagh' when I introduced myself and subsequently ask about the research. My strategy of being open about doing the research with as many participants as possible seemed to work effectively as my reputation as 'the researcher' often preceded me.

Despite attempts to conduct 'overt' research, there are covert elements to all ethnographies (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001; Parr, 2001). In her reflections upon doing ethnography, Hester Parr (2001) notes the 'blurriness' between overt/covert roles. For instance, she explains how she started recording particular encounters in her participant observation setting that had not been explicitly negotiated with her gatekeepers at the beginning of the research. Arguably, no ethnographer is ever in the position to claim complete 'overt' status and indeed, it may not always be

desirable to do so (see for example Wilton, 2000). Whilst I made no attempt to deliberately conceal my research purpose or identity, it would have been impossible to inform, or gain permission from, everyone who entered the setting of blind golf whilst the research was in progress. As Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwall (2001, p.342) state, “in complex and mobile settings it may simply be impractical to seek consent from everyone involved”. This was certainly true in this project, since participant observation involved attending blind golf events at different venues throughout Scotland.

In this particular project, however, there was another ‘covert’ element that remained unresolvable. As participant observation is primarily, but not exclusively, a visual method of gathering data, there is the added ethical dilemma over using a visual-based research method to generate data on visual impairment. For example, some of the blind golfers would not always be aware of my presence in the same room or on the golf course and therefore could not choose to modify or alter their behaviour in front of ‘the researcher’. To dilute this dilemma, I would try and chat with as many as the golfers as possible when I arrived at an SBGS event, acknowledge my presence on the golf course where possible, in the clubhouse and so on. Given the heterogeneity of visual impairments amongst the players, this ‘covert’ element would be not be experienced evenly by all participants.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Conducting ethnographic research within a small organisation or group of people may ease some of the tensions around ‘covert’ ethnography, yet conversely there is a difficulty of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality (see also Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). When negotiating access at organisational level, the SBGS did not demand anonymity. In fact, it was in their interests for the SBGS to be fully acknowledged as part of their efforts to promote the organisation and its work. The SBGS hoped that this research project could help raise awareness of the existence of blind golf in Scotland and of the SBGS, and therefore they were never keen for their anonymity to be protected. What was agreed before conducting participant observation, however, was that research data would be treated confidentially and

sensitively and the personal experiences of access to, and participation in, blind golf used in the thesis would be anonymised.

Firstly, this meant that I would not be passing on details of 'who said what' between people involved within the organisation (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992 pp.84-5). This was important because, as with any small society or organisation, there are usually internal politics and it was not the purpose of the research to fuel any existing animosity, if indeed there was any, between members or between the SBGS and their membership. Individual interviewees were promised as much confidentiality and anonymity as possible. Again, I explained that I would treat interview material confidentially and would not discuss with other members of the Society who I had interviewed. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in the research. Similar strategies were implemented by Stuart Aitken (2001) in a project that interviewed couples both separately and together, to ensure that their responses were kept private and confidential from their partners; with the benefit of hindsight, however, they argued that further measures, such as scheduling interviews when partners were not around, would have also been conducive to protecting anonymity and privacy (Aitken, 2001 p.77). Research material was treated as confidential and so field notes and transcripts could only be read in raw form by myself, and occasionally my supervisors. I did explain to participants, that my supervisors might want to 'check' the way in which I was gathering information.

Ethnographic research also raises particular difficulties over anonymity and confidentiality given the in-depth, detailed character of information that makes participants identifiable (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001 p.341). Participants may always be identifiable to themselves and be able to recognise one another (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992 p.85). Although it might have been impossible to guarantee effective anonymisation of the SBGS, this level of openness generates dilemmas in relation to the anonymity of members. The decision was therefore taken to place an embargo on my thesis at The University of Edinburgh library because it would be difficult to ensure confidentiality, as well as anonymity for individual participants, if the document was read in this form. This decision was taken therefore

to protect participants' anonymity and the agreement of confidentiality. Specific difficulties arose, however, with interviewees. What I had not anticipated was that although the content of the conversations were held in confidence, some interviewees told other members that they had been interviewed. Like Aitken (2001), I found that the supposed 'private' boundaries of one-to-one interviewing can become 'public' through such processes. It is difficult enough to protect the anonymity of participants in ethnographic research without interviewees openly discussing the fact that they had been interviewed. I did, however, decide that it was not solely up to me to protect anonymity, and if they wanted to tell their fellow golfers that they had been interviewed then that was up to them. We had already discussed issues of anonymity and confidentiality and so they were aware of how to protect their anonymity if they so wished. This did mean though, that despite the use of pseudonyms, some interviewees may be identified, but then this may always be the case with ethnographic research (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001).

Participant observation and writing field notes

Participant observation was conducted at various blind golf competitions and tournaments organised by the SBGS throughout the golf season (see Table 3.1). Participant observation was further undertaken at 'non-golf course' SBGS events such as the SBGS Annual General Meeting, a television shoot for a short promotional film about Scottish Blind Golf, and also a lecture-based presentation about blind golf to a small social club. At most of the 'golf course based' and also 'non-golf course based' events, participant observation extended beyond the actual time limits and place of the event itself. Data collection included time spent travelling to and from events with the golfers and guides whether by bus, car or train; two of the longer tournaments also involved staying at the same accommodation as players and guides and thus participant observation conducted at hotels, pubs and restaurants. Data were collected via participant observation at blind golf settings, therefore, that extended beyond the golf course and the game of golf.

Table 3.1 Blind golf tournaments where participant observation was undertaken.

5 player-guide events	The Scottish Strokeplay
4 Classics (individual strokeplay)	The Scottish Pairs
2 International Matches	The Millennium Cup (player-guide)
The Scottish Matchplay	2 SBGS Fundraiser events

The method of participant observation usually involves researchers moving between participation in a community and observing a community (Cook, 1997 p.127). This meant that my field notes were constructed from different positions because I occupied different roles as an ethnographer. For example, at the first few events I attended I was more an observer than participant. I tended to 'hang out' with participants, travelling with golfers and guides to the event, chatting with various golfers, guides and other people not associated with blind golf at the golf club, wandering around the golf course and so on. In this kind of role, I could make observations about guides and golfers on the golf course and beyond, as well as their interactions with other people either at the golf club itself, on the golf course and so on. I would have my rucksack and note pad on the golf course, invariably getting 'slagged off' by golfers and guides for being a reporter or being asked for food! This role was never a complete observer, however, as I would be asked to do certain 'favours' by SBGS organisers such as taking the role of starting off the players from the first tee, or whilst on the golf course I would take part as a 'ball spotter', often helping players and guides look for their golf ball in the rough and so on.

The roles in which I was undertaking participant observation were fluid and changed over time, partly because I was flexible about being used by the SBGS in roles instigated by them as part of building a reciprocal relationship with participants where I could provide some practical assistance to the Society. For instance, I noted above that I guided more often for different players at competitions. After a few events of being more of an 'observer' than participant, the golfers realised I would be available to guide. Sometimes this meant I 'filled in' as a guide at the last minute for a player, but the players I had guided for previously also began to ask me to guide for

them at national events. I also played with SBGS members at player-guide events. The most significant role I was asked to perform, however, was to create a promotional video for the Society. In collaboration with the SBGS and other contacts, I filmed, edited and produced this video on their request. The promotional video continues to be used at golf clubs that host or might host blind golf events, and to attract potential sponsors and new members. The SBGS and its members, therefore, drew upon my skills and resources effectively. These different roles demonstrate the fluid and changing nature between participation and observation in this method (see also Cook, 1997; Parr, 2001). My field notes were constructed from these different roles. This was also indicative of my methodological approach, where I was committed to enact, where possible, participatory and emancipatory elements within the research process.

Field notes were compiled by taking down jottings (key words, phrases, events etc.) in a small notebook to help trigger my memory when writing a fuller account. Russell Bernard (2002, p.186) distinguishes between three different kinds of field notes: methodological, descriptive and analytical. After Bernard (2002), my field notes recorded how I went about collecting the data, from notes on negotiating access to the different roles I occupied and so on, as well as critical reflections about the research process. The bulk of my field notes were descriptive, however, such as describing the physical surroundings, who was all there, actions and events that took place, interactions between people, what conversations took place, the weather and so on. Interwoven throughout these notes were also my analytical thoughts such as my analysis of a particular social situation or happening. Taking Bernard's (2002) advice, I tried to write the more detailed notes of my participant observation experience as soon as possible. This involved "making a story of what you learned out of the fragments you have at the end of the day" (Cook, 1997 p.141). This fuller account was typed straight into a word processor that made it easy for data management, coding and analysis. For the latter, the word-processed files were copied into the NVivo computer package, but I elaborate upon my use of NVivo in separate subsection following the discussion on ethnographic interviews.

Conducting ethnographic interviews

I chose to conduct interviews with golfers in addition to doing participant observation in order to obtain one-to-one, indepth personal accounts of blind golf. It enabled me to gain access to more detailed information from key informants on various issues and events (Davies, 1999; Sherman Heyl, 2001), including a thorough exploration of how they became involved with blind golf. Nine ethnographic interviews with golfers were conducted. Recruiting interviewees was not difficult since many of the golfers offered to be interviewed; in the event, I actually needed to avoid interviewing every person who offered in order to safeguard my time and resources. The period of participant observation helped me build up some biographical details on the golfers, and it is from this information that I selected interview participants.

The purpose of ethnographic interviewing is to “obtain a variety of interpretations rather than to seek consistencies” (Davies, 1999 p.98) and with this theoretical consideration in mind, I sought respondents from a range of social positions. Interviewees were selected across age, class, sight category, whether they had played golf as a sighted player or not, the length of time that they had been involved with the SBGS, the kinds of positions they held in relation to the SBGS and also whether they played golf only through the SBGS or participated in a local golf club. Table 3.2 provides contextual information on the interviewees. They were ‘formally’ recruited via telephone contact; again, I used telephone calls as opposed to a letter for accessibility. Although I had spoken with all the interviewees before, I used our first telephone call to explicitly ask for their consent and discuss the kinds of issues that might arise during the course of the interview itself, and emphasise that the interview would probably be 1-2 hours in length. Confidentiality was discussed at this point, as well as agreeing that pseudonyms would be used to protect their anonymity (although see above for difficulties with confidentiality and anonymity relevant to this study). Two interviewees asked for a copy of the interview themes to be sent to them before the interview, although I reiterated that these themes would be used flexibly as a guide as opposed to rigidly adhered to. The interviewees chose the place and time of their interview with most being conducted in their own homes,

apart from two interviewees who selected a local café and their local golf club respectively. After the interviews had been conducted, all participants were telephoned the following day to thank them again for their time. Again, this was in preference to a written thank you letter. Interview notes were written before, during and after the interview (Davies, 1999).

Table 3.2 Contextual information on interviewees at time of interview

Duncan	In his 50s, and middle class, Duncan was a director of a company before being made redundant. His sight classification is B2, and his golf handicap 26. He was a sighted golfer previously and continues to play at his local golf club. Duncan has been a member of the SBGS for around 6 years and is currently involved in the organisation of blind golf at national level.
Stevie	Stevie is in his late 50s, working class and currently works in a sheltered workshop for blind people. His sight category is either B2 or B3 and his golf handicap is 24. He played as a sighted golfer, and has been a member of the SBGS for about 10 years. He has never been a member of a golf club. Stevie has previously been involved in the organisation of blind golf at District level.
Chris	In his late 40s, and working class, Chris is an audio-typist. His sight classification is B3 and his golf handicap 23. Chris was born with a visual impairment and took up the game as a blind golfer. He has been a member of the SBGS for around 5 years and joined a local golf club about 2 years ago with support from the SBGS. He is currently involved in organising District events.
Nick	Nick is in his late 30s, working class and unemployed. His sight category is B1, and his golf handicap 31. Although not born blind, Nick took up golf as a blind golfer. He has been an SBGS member for 10 years and recently joined a local golf club too. Nick is heavily involved in the running of the SBGS and organisation of blind golf.
Gus	In his late 70s, and working class, Gus is now retired. His sight classification is B2, and his golf handicap is 21. Gus was a sighted golfer previously and continues to play at his local club. He has been a member of the SBGS for 7 years, and although a past-District captain, he is no longer involved in any administration or organising of blind golf events.
Robert	In his mid 80s, and working class, Robert is now retired from his office job. His sight category is B1 and his golf handicap 56. He played golf as a sighted player for a while, before giving the game up for family and work commitments. He only later re-joined the game as a blind player with the SBGS and after that became a member of a local golf club too. Robert has been a member of the SBGS for about 16 years, and is a past District Captain.
Colin	Colin is in his early 60s, working class and unemployed (unsure if he was 'medically retired' from previous job). His sight classification is B3 and his golf handicap 11. Colin was a sighted golfer previously and continues to play at his local club. He has only recently joined the SBGS, but is starting to become involved with the organisation of blind golf at District level.

Calum	In his late 40s, and working class, Calum works in social services. He was born blind and his sight category is either B2 or B3 with a golf handicap of 26. He has been involved in blind golf since its beginnings and had never played golf before the SBGS was formed. He is now also a member of his local golf club. Calum is past Captain of the SBGS and past District Captain, but is no longer involved in any organisational duties.
David	David is in his late 50s, middle class and was 'medically retired' from his previous job where he worked as a manager. He hasn't worked in paid employment since. His sight category is B2 and his golf handicap 18. He never played golf as a sighted player, and only took up the game through the SBGS. David has been involved in blind golf from its beginnings and has formerly held the responsibilities of SBGS Captain, District Captain and Secretary of the SBGS.

Findings from participant observation contributed to the formulation of interview themes and questions. If particular issues or events had taken place in blind golf that involved the interviewee, I also made a note on the interview guide to prompt them further for their perspective on such matters. The interview guide (see appendix one) was therefore used as a checklist of themes that could be covered, but I did not go into the interview situation with the intention that all themes had to be covered, and all questions had to be asked. On both the contact telephone call, and on the day of the interview, I stressed to the golfers that the aim of the interview was to develop a conversation exploring *their* story of *their* participation in golf. I explained that I would not be firing 100 questions at them and expecting every one to be answered. As Charlotte Davies (1999, p.109) argues, the ethnographer should attempt to "present the interview as a joint exploration of the topic of research, rather than a mining of the interviewee for information". I asked open-ended questions so that the research participants could speak in their own words and raise the issues that they felt were important in the story they had to tell. At the end of every interview, I asked if there were any topics they felt we needed to discuss further or if there were any issues that we had not covered, but they felt we should. As with the generation of data through participant observation, however, both interviewer and interviewee are involved in the co-construction of knowledge in ethnographic interviews. Furthermore, our intersubjective relationships and multiple, fractured and fluid identities, impact on this co-construction of knowledge (Sherman Heyl, 2001 p.370):

Interviewing involves a complex form of social interaction with interviewees, and that interview data are co-produced in these interactions (Sherman Heyl, 2001 p.370)

Although interviewees had some control over the interview process and the construction of their narratives, I was by no means passive within this process.

Most interviews lasted for an hour and a half and permission for the interview to be taped was granted. The taped interviews were fully transcribed – no attempt was made to alter the actual words and style of speech such as class-based dialects, Scots words and so on (Davies, 1999 p.115; see also following subsection). Copies of the tapes were offered to all interviewees so that they had the opportunity to add, or delete, or revise their narrative. All interviewees accepted that offer. As I telephoned each participant on the day I posted the copies to them, I took this opportunity to remind them that they could decide at any point that they did not want the interview to be used for research purposes. On reflection, I have mixed feelings about giving the interviewees copies of their tapes so readily. Although the interviewees were pleased to have the opportunity to listen to the interview, one in particular telephoned to apologise for ‘rambling’ and was dismayed at how the interview sounded on tape. I reassured him that the interview provided a detailed story of how he became involved in blind golf and his experiences since joining the SBGS. This seemed to settle the way in which he had reacted to our interview. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001, p.340) note, ethnographers can harm the individuals or groups they study, for example experiencing anxiety, stress or damage to self-esteem during data collection and so care was taken when dealing with this phone call. Giving some people the opportunity to listen back through the interview may not always be a positive experience; listening to their own ‘everyday’ experiences may seem like ‘rambling’ because of its taken-for-granted familiarity. In future research, I would inform interviewees that they may or may not enjoy listening to themselves on tape. None of the interviewees have pulled out of the research and so all interview data were used for coding and analysis.

Managing the data, coding and analysis

Participant observation notes and interview transcripts were analysed using a form of discourse analysis, which is appropriate for the analysis of spoken and written texts. There is a variety of discourse analytic approaches that have been applied in different ways within different disciplines and thus influenced by different theoretical frameworks (Burman and Parker, 1993; Fairclough, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1994; Tonkiss, 1998). For instance, some approaches are linguistic orientated, focusing more closely on the actual text and organisation of talk, whilst others may draw from frameworks such as poststructuralism and pay attention to the social aspects of discourse, and are more likely to 'go beyond' the text (Potter and Wetherell, 1994; Tonkiss, 1998). These approaches are united in their focus on language as an active and powerful medium for the construction of meaning rather than a transparent, or neutral form of communicating information (Burman and Parker, 1993 p.3). Language is treated as socially significant and placed at the centre of social life (Fairclough, 1992 p.6). Fran Tonkiss (1998, p.247), therefore, writes: "discourse analysts are interested in language and texts as sites in which social meanings are created and reproduced, and social identities formed". As I explain in more detail below, the form of discourse analysis that I used was 'open' and 'thematic', rather than the finer-grained methods associated with linguistic-orientated discourse analyses. I worked closely with the texts, but was also concerned with the social context, both of which were mediated by language.

Discourse can be defined in the narrow sense of speech, conversation or utterances and so on. My theoretical approach to discourse, however, also defines discourse as:

A specific set of representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced, connected into networks and legitimised (Gregory, 2000 p.180).

So, for example, there is a legal discourse, medical discourse, Christian discourse and so on. From this perspective, discourses are treated as multiple, regulated, contradictory, situated and embedded in a network of institutions and subject-positions (Gregory, 2000, pp.180-181; for similar definitions see also Fairclough, 1992; Tonkiss, 1998). Although discourses are open to contestation, they can become

so powerful that they are naturalised and shape the contours of the 'taken-for-granted world' (Gregory, 2000 p.181). The method of discourse analysis is partly to challenge taken-for-granted viewpoints and disrupt "easy assumptions about the organisation of social life and social meanings" (Tonkiss, 1998 p.254). This is especially important given the connections between power, knowledge and spatiality in discursive constructions (Foucault, 1977). In the analysis of discourses, therefore, it is important to look for themes and patterns, as well as inconsistencies, contradictions, conflicting ideas, conjectures about alternative accounts, negotiations, silences and so on (Tonkiss, 1998). This idea of discourse analysis influenced the coding and subsequent analysis of coded data.

A coding framework (see appendix two) was developed before using NVivo computer software package to code and 'file' these coded data. To start trying to make sense of the material, I used a form of 'open coding' in order to immerse myself in the data (Crang, 1997 p.186). I read and re-read through my field notes and interview transcripts, manually recording my thoughts on emerging themes and potential codes by annotating the transcripts or highlighting key words and phrases. Codes were developed not so much for the frequency with which they occurred, but for what was in them and thus used "as an aid to the researcher in making sense of the material" (Crang, 1997 p.188). To collate these preliminary ideas and develop them into a coding framework, I used A3 sheets of paper. I developed 8 broad themes – 'methodological issues', 'the history and development of blind golf', 'the organisation and provision of blind golf', 'participation in blind golf', 'participation in golf', 'guides and the player-guide relationship', 'interactions/relations with others' and 'politics of inclusion, segregation or integration' – and used colour pen to write down all the codes I thought related to that theme underneath. This process used my jottings in order to formalise them into categories or codes (Crang, 1997); the codes were thus abbreviations and so I gave detailed descriptions of what I meant by each coding category (see appendix two). Although this approach to developing codes might be described as 'grounded theory' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), my interpretation and choice of codes were inevitably influenced by my theoretical framework and were thus also conceptually driven.

Once the coding framework was developed, all source materials were coded using NVivo computing software package. NVivo was also used as a means to help manage and retrieve these coded data. To this end, computer software is beneficial to support data management, providing flexibility and efficiency, but cannot *do* the analysis (Crang, 1997; Kitchen and Tate, 2000 p.257; Okley, 1994). I agree with Judith Okely (1994, p.25) who states: “No computer can think through the fieldwork”. Even after codes have been developed and data coded there is still much more analysis to be undertaken, as Mike Crang argues:

They [i.e. codes] are not an end in themselves. Codes provide a means of conceptually organising your materials, but not an explanatory framework in themselves (Crang, 1997 p.194).

NVivo was therefore used only to attach the manually derived codes to excerpts, and to reorganise the material into coded categories. Although my initial data management and coding worked very much from the data, I moved to another level of analysis that involved re-interpreting this coding framework in relation to substantive debates (cf. ‘grounded theory’ proposed by Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Following Okely’s (1994, p.32) assertion that the interpretation of qualitative material is an ongoing and creative experience, my analysis proceeded in a similar way: “Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory, then back again” (Okely, 1994 p.32). I analysed groups of codes (for example, ‘guides and the player-guide relationship’), which were printed out and further annotated with emerging insights and produced into pieces of written analysis that made connections with substantive debates in relevant literatures. This ‘thematic’ analysis was a continuing and iterative process that involved working with raw material in combination with academic literatures (Tonkiss, 1998). My selection of substantive themes cannot be separated from my engagement with theoretical debates in relation to literatures on disability, sport and visual impairment.

Three key themes that emerged from this analysis are dealt with in the substantive chapters that follow. Examining the first theme, the thesis discusses personal and organisational journeys into blind golf. The impact of less tangible barriers, particularly disabling attitudes, on the players’ experiences of access to, and

sense of inclusion in, golf are explored. This chapter highlights that barriers are embedded in the 'everyday' encounters in the golfing landscape between blind and sighted people. The analysis of this theme further argues that although the golfers have accessed their chosen sport, this participation remains an unequal and disabling experience. The second theme moves from considerations of the golfers' relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf, to the interpersonal relationships between players (blind golfers) and their guide (sighted person). The need for a guide raises key issues connected to disability and feminist debates surrounding the social relations of help. This theme focuses on the way in which help is given and experienced from the perspectives of the player. The final substantive theme to emerge was the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape within the spaces of blind golf. It demonstrates how the golfers actively mediate their own identities and relationships in blind golf. Identifying, or being identified, as a 'blind golfer' is not intrinsically negative yet can be fraught with contradictions. The analysis therefore develops a critical argument for a more nuanced understanding of blind identities.

Quotations from the interviews and excerpts from participant observation notes are used to support the discussion within the substantive chapters. Since styles of transcription and excerpting vary tremendously (Crang, 1997 p.185), I did not feel compelled to follow any particular orthodoxy. Because I did not undertake a form of conversation analysis, I did not find it useful to follow detailed transcription rules that try to represent, as much as possible, overlapping speech, gaps, precise timings of pauses, stresses, change in tones and speech of talk, intonation and so on (for example, see Silverman, 2001 p.303). The transcripts and excerpts have been slightly modified or 'tidied up' to enable to the reader to make sense of the stories, actions or interactions conveyed in these chapters and thus improve readability. That said, I have tried to represent accent in the transcripts and also kept some verbal utterances such as 'em', 'er', 'you know' and so on. I have underlined individual words or sentences which were stressed by participants, noted some hesitation and repetition, and non-verbal aspects of communication, such as laughter, where it was judged to be significant. The written word is very different from the spoken and

whilst I did not feel that verbatim quotations were appropriate, neither did I agree with changing the participants' language into standard English, altering their actual words or style of speech (Davies, 1999 pp.112-116). Like Davies (1999; see also Devault, 1990), I did not feel that such *extensive* editing was justified in order to improve their accessibility to the audience and because I wanted to convey the participants' stories, to some extent, 'in their own words'. When non-verbal utterances or sections of intervening text have been edited, however, I have replaced them with three dots. Excerpts from participation observation notes are numbered as 07, 08 and so on to represent the different months in which they were written. Within these months, a number of different tournaments and events organised by the SBGS were attended. If data are not attributed with 'Field Notes' in brackets, then they derive from ethnographic interview material, with the name of the interviewee highlighted beside the quotation.

Dissemination

Disseminating research findings in the form of accessible reports written for different audiences, such as participants or policy-makers, is linked to feminist and disability researchers' concerns with facilitating social change. Feminist geographer Parvati Raghuram and her co-authors (1998, p.43) urge researchers to "present multiple reports suitable for different audiences to widen the impact of the research". Likewise, disability researchers have shared their research findings with participants, and widely disseminated these findings to policy-makers, practitioners, non-academic magazines and papers and so on, as well as academic journals (for example: Chouinard, 2000; Davis, 2000; Shakespeare, 1997; Ward and Flynn, 1994; Ward, 1997; Kitchen, 2000b; 2001). Influenced by these debates, I intend to disseminate and discuss the research findings with the SBGS and participants in an accessible, appropriate and sensitive manner – especially given my concerns over anonymity and confidentiality. The SBGS has already agreed to participate in this ongoing process of disseminating research findings to different audiences, but the finer details of exactly how this dialogue and contribution will take place has yet to be decided. One likely scenario is to disseminate research findings via the SBGS' internet site, especially since I am in frequent contact with the SBGS member who

acts as the Editor and that the site incorporates a password-protected 'SBGS members area' as well as a more public 'press room'³.

Sharing research findings with participants will follow certain conventions such as communicating the main findings succinctly in short reports and in as many formats as necessary such as large print, disk and so on (Kitchin and Tate, 2000 p.273; Ward and Flynn, 1994 p.41). The dissemination of research findings to policy-makers, such as those involved in widening participation in golf in Sportscotland or governing bodies such as The Scottish Golf Union, is likely to follow the brief *Findings* reports adopted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Ward and Flynn, 1994 p.43). This reporting will be done more fully in due course. In disseminating the research findings of this project in such ways, however, it is hoped that it may be possible to challenge stereotypes and prejudice surrounding disabled people by providing more positive and varied accounts of everyday experience (Davis, 2000; Morris, 1992; Shakespeare, 1997; see also chapter two).⁴ As Shakespeare hoped in the joint publication of a text on disability and sexuality: "that disabled people would recognise their own experiences and would feel validated by the accounts we publish" (Shakespeare, 1997 p.184).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed on-going methodological debates concerning disability research, as well as described my research practice in this study of blind golf. In the first half of the chapter, three key aspects of debates over how disability research should be conducted and by whom were examined. In so doing, I highlighted my position in relation to these debates. Firstly, I outlined the ways in which disability research has contributed to the oppression, exclusion and marginalisation of disabled people. It is these criticisms of disability research that have led to a call for a new research paradigm, centred upon emancipatory and participatory research practices. Secondly, I discussed the role of non-disabled

³ The SBGS' internet site can be accessed at: www.scottishblindgolf.com

researchers and initially questioned whether I should be involved in doing disability research at all. In this sub-section, I concluded that there are multiple axes of difference between the researcher and the researched and thus all researchers, whether disabled or non-disabled, must recognise the power-relations in which they are embedded. In the third sub-section, I therefore turned my attention to debates over emancipatory disability research, elaborating upon what this involved and whether it was achievable or desirable. Drawing upon other researchers' reflections upon this approach, I suggested that there remain many uncertainties and potential pitfalls with this methodology. I concluded that it was not possible to adopt a fully emancipatory approach to doing disability research, but I certainly attempted to equalise researcher-researched relations, include the research participants as active contributors to the research rather than passive subjects of it and enable participants to draw upon my skills and resources in practical, and helpful, ways.

The second half of the chapter provided a detailed account of the ways in which project data were generated, managed and analysed. In this section I included ethical dilemmas associated with doing ethnographic research, as well as the decisions I took as a result of the above debates. The research design was able to actively involve the SBGS and individual members to a certain degree and there were participatory elements, and potentially emancipatory contributions. My academic authority largely controls the analysis and substantive themes that were 'written-up'. I reflect upon the nature of my research practice more thoroughly in chapter seven, and so for now I turn my attention to the first of three substantive chapters, which discusses the impact of less tangible barriers, especially disabling attitudes, on the players' experiences of access to, and sense of inclusion in, the game of golf.

4

Relations Outwith¹: barriers to participation in golf

4.1 Introduction

The social model of disability gives priority to identifying and challenging barriers to disabled people's full and equal participation in society. As argued in chapter two, the barriers that receive most attention are structural barriers that impact upon disabled people's lives. Geographers, for example, have examined the disablist organisation of space through its physical structuring, such as stressing the inaccessibility of the built environment. Likewise, recent research on sport has highlighted structural constraints to disabled people's participation such as transport problems or poor physical access (Collins, 2003; Thomas, 2003). In emphasising wider socio-political circumstances and structural barriers that create disability oppression, other issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces have been neglected. Drawing upon feminist disability theorists (for example: Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Chouinard, 1997; 2001; Morris, 1991; 1996), I argued that prominence must also be given to changing the social environment – especially socio-spatial relations, interactions and attitudes – in order to improve disabled people's participation in social life. I emphasised the spatiality of social relations because, as Kitchin (1998; see also Chouinard, 1997; 2001) argues, social

¹ Outwith is a Scots word, which many English dictionaries do not list. It is widely used in Scotland to mean 'outside of' (see also <http://dictionary.oed.com>).

space both keeps disabled people 'in their place' at the same time as making them feel 'out of place'. This chapter turns its attention to these issues since a key finding of this project has been the impact of less tangible barriers, particularly disabling attitudes, on the blind golfers' experiences of access to, and sense of inclusion in, the spaces of golf.

The chapter as a whole captures events and moments where taken-for-granted assumptions about what is 'normal' in golf are disrupted and transgressed. This transgression, and reactions to it, is significant because they can highlight 'normative' geographies (Cresswell, 1996), which in this context are ableist geographies. As Cresswell writes (1996, p.26): "transgression is important because it breaks from "normality" and causes a questioning of that which was previously considered "natural", "assumed", and "taken-for-granted"". In Cresswell's terms, transgression literally means 'crossing a boundary' and this chapter explores the boundaries of who is 'in place' and 'out of place' in the spaces of golf, and thus analyses processes of in/exclusion to accessing, and participating, in the sport.

It begins with a discussion of organisational and personal journeys into blind golf. In the first section, I provide an account of the history and development of Scottish Blind Golf. Although there is no available information on visually impaired people playing golf before the SBGS was officially formed, an interesting story emerges from the early 1980s. This story is based on conversations with various blind golfers, especially long-standing members of the SBGS. I then discuss its initial aims and objectives as well as how the SBGS negotiated its place in golf. This history is infused with processes of in/exclusion and is, therefore, written as a story of who facilitated and hindered the development of blind golf. In the second section, I discuss the main pathways and transitions into blind golf for its members. Accessing blind golf is by no means a straightforward process and their personal journeys highlight some key difficulties that blind people face in taking up the sport. The research participants' stories, however, are told by those who have managed to successfully challenge key barriers to accessing the sport. The barriers to blind people's full and meaningful involvement in golf do not diminish once the sport is

accessed; rather, as I argue in the final section, disabling barriers are embedded in the 'everyday' encounters in the golfing landscape between blind and sighted people. Although the golfers are participating in their chosen sport, this participation remains an unequal and disabling experience.

4.2 Starting from outwith: an organisational journey into blind golf

"Since its humble beginnings in 1982, the "SBGS" has now developed into a well respected sports body where you can compete at local and national level, as well as being the outlet for its members to play in international events throughout the world". (SBGS official website)

From local contacts to international relations

Before the SBGS came into being, there was no recognition of blind golfers in Scotland. None of the mainstream golf organisations or governing bodies - such as The Scottish Golf Union, The Scottish Ladies Golf Association, or The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A) - promoted the sport as a game for visually impaired people as well as the sighted golfers they represented. As such, there was no development within the sport that addressed the inclusion of blind golfers. With no acknowledgement of, or promotion for, blind golfers, it is not surprising that very few visually impaired people participated. Golf was promoted unwittingly as a sport for sighted persons; sight was taken-for-granted as a prerequisite for participation (and continues to be as will be discussed later). The established, taken-for-granted norm in golf was the inclusion of sighted people and the marginalisation and exclusion of visually impaired and blind people. The emergence of a blind golf organisation in Scotland, however, exposed this boundary and challenged this established norm.

The original idea of establishing such an organisation emerged after criticism was levelled at golf in the UK by an American blind golfer called Pat Browne. In September 1979, he travelled to Scotland to play the Championship courses, and in the local press he expressed his disappointment that there was no blind golf

association in the UK or any formal recognition that visually impaired and blind people could, or do, play golf (Field Notes 07). Learning that a blind golf organisation existed in the USA provided a significant stimulus to developing a similar organisation to promote blind golf in Scotland².

Against this background emerged an initiative to create an organisation to provide opportunities for visually impaired and blind people to play golf. This challenge to the taken-for-granted assumption of golf as a game by, and for, sighted people began from a small number of blind people who were interested in playing golf, one of whom had read the article on Pat Browne. Developing this organisation, however, proved a difficult task. Many people and organisations were contacted in the early 1980s, not all of whom were positive about the concept of blind golf, as this section and the next demonstrates. From the beginning, there were many “*knock-backs*”, as Andrew told me that “*the Society got a number of nice letters from people saying, you know, ‘wonderful to see you’re so enthusiastic, but it’ll never work [laughs]’*” (Field Notes 07). Such responses, or “*knock-backs*”, can be interpreted as exclusionary practices that attempted to keep blind people ‘in their place’, which is excluded from golf rather than actively participating in it.

Others were more encouraging; for instance, the National Secretary of the Blind Bowlers Association in Scotland agreed to mention blind golf in one of their circulars, but there were no responses. The mainstream media were contacted too, especially sports editors of the Scottish press. Although interested, they explained that blind golf would be given press coverage only once an organisation was properly formed. This was not much help at a stage when it was the *idea* of blind golf that was in need of promotion. The first productive response was from a tape magazine for visually impaired and blind people called *Playback*. Its editor agreed to help appeal for other blind and visually impaired people to get in contact in order to set up an organisation for blind golfers. Although *Playback* was encouraging of the idea,

² Pat Browne was President of the United States Blind Golf Association (USBGA) from 1976-1992. Details of the emergence of the USBGA can be found on their website at http://www.blindgolf.com/United_States/USHomePage.htm

there were no responses to the article. On running the article for a second time, however, three people responded and agreed to meet to discuss future possibilities.

Initially, blind golf started with this small group travelling from the Ayrshire and Glasgow regions to use the driving range facilities at Auchenhavie Golf Club, situated in the West of Scotland. They called themselves, 'West of Scotland Visually Impaired Golfers'. Auchenhavie driving range was primarily chosen because it was a central location between these players and accessible by train. This turned out to be a good choice since one day at the range the blind golfers started chatting with some local players, one of who turned out to be the then Captain who took the provision of golf for blind people seriously. Andrew told me that *"to meet someone who actually played golf and was enthusiastic [the Captain at Auchenhavie] was the very first one. You know, that felt absolutely, you know you felt ten foot tall then when you got such positive support"* (Field Notes 07). This connection with Auchenhavie was not simply created by locational factors or the positive attitudes extended by Auchenhavie members. It was also shaped by the exclusionary practices of other clubs, as Mike recalls: *"we didnae have another club that would take visually impaired people on at that time. So we had to go all the way to Auchenhavie cos they were the only ones who were interested"* (Field Notes 08). Auchenhavie Golf Club and its members, however, proved to be a key facilitator in the emergence and development of blind golf in Scotland. The more inclusionary practices of *Playback* and members at Auchenhavie serve to remind us that processes of inclusion and exclusion are dynamic and changing. In seeking to create a place for blind people in golf, not every organisation or sighted golfer defended the established norm that sight was a prerequisite for access to, and participation in, the game.

The initial group gradually grew into about 12 playing members at which point two districts were formed: Ayrshire and Glasgow. Over the next couple of years, awareness of blind golf and the organisation had increased throughout Scotland and districts were formed in both the East of Scotland and later in Tayside. With four districts operating in Scotland, it was decided to properly form a national

association. This association came into being in 1986, then called the Scottish Association of Visually Handicapped Golfers. A few years later, the name was changed to The Scottish Blind Golf Society. The Society ran Inter-District league matches played over nine holes at different courses within each district. The Inter-District matches were based on a team of four members from each district on a matchplay format, but with a growing number of members within each District, not everyone was able to compete. The Inter-District matches, therefore, were eventually phased out in favour of 18-hole strokeplay events termed 'The Classics'. Each District organised a Classic that members from throughout Scotland could enter. The Classics now form The Order of Merit from which international teams are selected from the points table³.

With Societies formed in both Scotland and England – according to Andrew the English Blind Golf Society (EBGS) formed in the early 1980s with help from the Scottish-based blind golfers - the first blind golf international between the two countries was organised in 1984 and continued throughout the 1980s, irregularly due to funding problems. These internationals are now held every year alternating between Scotland and England. It is based on a Ryder Cup (professional men's golf team event between USA and Europe) format with teams of 12 blind players. The first International match was significant for generating publicity for blind golf, albeit very locally on the radio. The SBGS also managed to secure some support from the local authority. Other prestigious international events have developed including the Scotland versus Ireland annual match, The British Blind Open and The British Blind Masters. The first ever British Blind Open was held in 1987 at Cawder Golf Club, Glasgow, organised by the SBGS. This was a noteworthy event for blind golf because visually impaired players were contacted by the SBGS not just throughout the UK, but also in Ireland, Canada and the USA. It was the first ever major blind golf event across international boundaries; a field of around 40 blind players, including 7 Americans and 4 Canadians competed. This was the springboard for the

³ To represent Scottish Blind Golf, you do not have to be 'Scottish by birth' or through family, such as Grandparents. To represent Scotland as a blind golfer, you simply have to be a member of the SBGS and qualify through their Order of Merit points system. There is a mixture of nationalities within the SBGS.

creation of The International Blind Golf Association (IBGA). The funding resources available for this tournament were to have a long-lasting effect due to the creation of the IBGA and many international contacts. Financial support was, and continues to be, an important part of the in/exclusion dynamic for blind people in golf.

It is no coincidence that funding was made available for this event in 1987 because that year Glasgow City Council were involved in promoting disability sport as part of the Scottish Year of Disabled Sports (Field Notes 08). The Scottish Sports Association for The Disabled (now Scottish Disability Sport) were promoting various disability sports events throughout Scotland that year and they too encouraged the SBGS to organise an event as part of these celebrations. There have been policy approaches that attempt to tackle inequality towards disabled people in Scottish sport, and the development of blind golf was influenced by policy decisions. For example, in the late 1980s The Scottish Sports Council (now sportscotland) produced a resource guide as part of their action to ensure that their 'sport for all' policy approach included disabled people (Scottish Sports Council, 1987). The original 'Sport for All?' campaign began in the early 1970s, but has never been fully achieved as there has only been partial success (Hylton and Totten, 2001). The Scottish Sports Council literature, however, states that:

Barriers in the form of inaccessible facilities and programmes, lack of transportation to, from and within programme sites, and negative attitudes of those providing services often prevent full and independent participation of disabled people in recreation and leisure activities (Scottish Sports Council, 1987).

As I mentioned in chapter two, other literatures have focused on the influence of sports policies and policy development on disability sport (for example: Braham, 2001; Collins, 2003; Thomas, 2003). Whilst this thesis does not analyse the impact of these policies per se, this wider socio-political context was important in the history and development of blind golf.

These local, national and international developments indicate that the SBGS transgressed the previously unarticulated norm that golf was of, and for, sighted people. Cresswell argues that transgressions do not necessarily depend on the

intentions of actors, but on the results of their actions “being noticed” (Cresswell. 1996 p.23). Indeed, sighted players, ‘mainstream’ golf clubs, local Councils, national disability sport organisations and sports policy-makers were now aware of the presence of blind golfers. The 1987 tournament was also significant in raising the profile of blind golf throughout Scotland:

Calum And then gradually, as a result of the 1987 event, we gradually got recognition from the R&A. We gradually started to get recognition from golf clubs em, because we started playing foursome events. So they started to get the impression, yeah we wirnae the world’s best golfers, but they probably had worse in their own clubs, you know. Em, so they gave us the opportunity and the word spread. And I think the word is spreading, but it’s a helluva slow process.

Other profile-raising opportunities have also left a lasting mark on Scottish blind golf. The Tayside District, for example, was to rapidly increase its membership in the 1990s due to the SBGS being given a stand in the merchandise tent of The Scottish Open Championship at Gleneagles (a popular men’s Scottish professional tournament held annually at Gleneagles at that time). The SBGS were able to distribute information to golfers from clubs across Scotland and beyond in the form of leaflets and a video which was shown inside their stand. This raised the profile of the Society and, therefore, of blind golf as a whole and further resulted in blind people “being noticed” in Scottish golf.

Since starting from outwith – as an excluded group – the SBGS has made a notable impact on Scottish golf. Within the constraints and barriers to the development of blind golf in Scotland (which will be discussed further within personal journeys into blind golf), it has grown from small and intensely localised beginnings in the West of Scotland to an organised, internationally recognised association. Significantly, the impetus has come from blind golfers forging connections to the sport of golf, as opposed to the sport being welcoming of blind people. The next subsection moves from this chronological account, therefore, to a discussion of how the SBGS negotiated its position.

Negotiating a place within golf

The SBGS was created *by* blind golfers *for* blind golfers. This ethos of having blind golfers in control of the organisation was established from the outset:

David We very much wanted to be in control of our own destiny if you like. And that was a conscious decision because the SBGS still wanted help from eh, sighted people but there was - we knew of instances where very enthusiastic sighted people have come in and maybe taken over other sports from blind and visually impaired [people], you know taken it out of their hands in a way. And we wanted, actually, to keep control of the, you know keep it within ourselves - maybe it was a bit of a selfish thing - but the SBGS took that conscious decision on their Executive that there would always be more visually impaired people than there was sighted people. It's worked quite well actually. It's worked very well.

Disability commentators have noted the differences between organisations of disabled people and organisations for disabled people, with the latter predominantly led by non-disabled people, and criticised for failing to represent disabled people's views as well as for undermining the efforts of disabled people to empower themselves (Drake, 1996; Oliver, 1990). This seems evident in the development of blind golf. Several golfers, for example, explained to me that the SBGS sought assistance from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in the beginning, but to no avail. For instance, they had contacted the Sports Development Officer at the RNIB, *"But [he] didn't think it was a very good idea ... we had a chat with [him] and [he] pooh-poohed the idea and didn't think it would work. 'Oh no', he says, 'This could never work' (Field Notes 06). One of the golfers added that, 'I wonder why he was a sports development officer for blind people?' [half-laughing] (Field Notes 06). The reaction of the RNIB reproduced ableism in golf that shapes the contours of who and what is 'in place' or 'out of place' in the sport, and what is 'in place' or 'out of place' for blind people (see also Scott, 1969).*

Its background as an organisation for, as opposed to of, blind people, can perhaps explain this reaction. In a conference concerned with 'Sport for All Disabled People' in 1981, for example, a sports development officer for the RNIB defines blindness through the lens of the medical model of disability and places the availability of sport for blind people in the context of rehabilitation, but also states that organisations of blind people are "the most important in future development plans" (Attrill, 1982 p.91). Despite the rhetoric of support for voluntary sports organisations of blind people in 1981 by the RNIB, the SBGS was not received positively or given support by this organisation. This experience with the RNIB further demonstrates the problem of (sighted) professionals putting forward their

'expert' views rather than listening to the intentions and interests of the people they purport to represent. The decision for blind golfers to remain in control of their organisation was connected to this idea that 'well-intentioned' sighted people may, like the RNIB sports development officer, fail to adequately promote opportunities for blind people to participate in golf.

The initial aims and objectives of the SBGS were embedded in ideas of providing equal opportunities for visually impaired people to play golf:

Calum The aims and objectives away back at the beginning were eh, [pauses] were very fundamental. They were about providing and supporting the game of golf to visually impaired people. And that was done on a very equal opportunity basis.

The SBGS was driven by two key aims: firstly, to promote golf to visually impaired people and secondly, to integrate blind and sighted golfers. The Society set about 'spreading the word' of blind golf to try and raise their profile and increase membership. This promotion was not only to try and encourage blind people, who had given up golf since the onset of their visual impairment, back into playing the game, but also visually impaired people who wanted to try and play golf for the first time. The principle of integration was to be achieved in two main ways. Firstly, the SBGS organised matches at golf clubs with mixed teams of blind and sighted players competing against each other, and secondly through the player-guide relationship. Thus, the SBGS productively held in tension their right to integrate with sighted people into golf, whilst promoting separate events and competitions between and for blind people. The Constitution of the SBGS clearly states that it aims to promote blind golf and thus assert the rights of visually impaired people to participate in the game whether through the SBGS or in local golf clubs.

The SBGS not only transgressed ableist geographies, but actively resisted disabling barriers with policies intended to increase blind people's access to, and participation in, the game. Their aims and objectives indicate a need for changing the way in which golf is organised around sighted people with little consideration for blind golfers – or the assumed 'normality'. The SBGS does not believe that blind people 'naturally' cannot play golf because of their impairment, but because of the lack of opportunities. That said, the ethos of the organisation was more about

allowing visually impaired and blind people to play golf rather than creating a political force, which could overturn disabling barriers; they were driven by the desire for equal opportunities to play golf and this has resulted in challenges to disability discrimination. Disability authors argue that organisations of disabled people tend to support a social model of disability, whereas organisations for disabled people – like traditional charitable institutions such as the RNIB – perpetuate a medical model of disability, in particular drawing upon notions of paternalism and patronage in their objectives (Drake, 1996; Morris, 1991 p.176; Oliver, 1990 p.115). Morris (1991, p.176) writes that:

Organisations of disabled people, on the other hand, reject the charity and the medical models of disability, asserting that the services we require should be provided as a civil right and that it is society which disables us rather than our physical condition.

The SBGS, however, do not fit neatly into this either/or situation; it both demonstrates a commitment to improving the situation for blind golfers by challenging barriers to participation *and* has developed within a charitable discourse that uses paternalism and patronage. The latter point is especially evident in the way that the SBGS has financially sustained the organisation and delivered provision for its members, which is discussed below. The SBGS does not endorse the social model, nor does it need to. What it shows is that radicalisation is not the only way to achieve political change. A commitment to equal opportunities is often enough (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001).

From the outset, the SBGS has accepted charitable donations, concessions from golf clubs that host SBGS events, raised money for the Society through raffles at local golf clubs, fundraiser dances, the placing of ‘money tins’ in local pubs and golf clubs, writing to various companies for sponsorship and so on. The SBGS may simply be replicating what many other sports organisations do; sports societies and organisations in general accept charitable donations and the SBGS uses that method of financial support too. Because it is a disability organisation, however, the use of charitable donations is more complicated. They have attracted funding and concessions through the idea that blind golf is a ‘good cause’ and do not attempt to resist the underlying discourse of ‘pity’ embedded in those charitable donations. The

Constitution of the SBGS states that it will raise funds, invite and receive contributions through subscription and donations “from any person or persons whatsoever”. More radical disability organisations refuse to accept such donations or align themselves with paternalism and patronage (Drake, 1996). Likewise, the Constitution of the SBGS adopts a rehabilitation approach to visually impaired people’s participation in golf:

The objects of the Society are to further the physical and mental health of all blind or partially sighted persons in Scotland to ameliorate their suffering and distress and to aid them in their handicaps specifically by promoting and encouraging their participation in, and the playing of, the game of golf.

The SBGS is not a radical or highly politicised organisation of blind people that straightforwardly adopts a social model perspective. Medical model ideas surrounding disability have influenced the organisation. Given the dominance of medical model understandings of disability in society, as chapter two argued, it is perhaps not surprising that they have influenced the development of blind golf. However, it could be that the SBGS are fully aware of the injustices that structure golf, but choose to ‘play’ with these discourses in contradictory ways in order to sustain their participation through, for example, the financial benefits that they bring.

The presence of blind people in golf and the creation of the SBGS also entailed a fundamental challenge to the ‘normality’ assumed in the rules of the game. As discussed in chapter two, golf is a sport that has developed without the recognition of disabled people and has been described as ‘ablebodied’ (Maas and Hasbrook, 2001). Ableism was embedded in the construction and development of the Rules of Golf. Thus the SBGS had to negotiate a change to the rules with the R&A, which is the governing authority on the rules of the game in some 100 countries throughout the world, including Scotland. David explains:

Now on the Rules of Golf, we recognised very early on, right back in ’82, ’83, that we could play to the Rules of Golf, but there was one problem: how we could play bunker shots. Because not being able to ground your club in a bunker was a huge problem. Especially for those who were totally blind. ... the only way we could play a bunker shot was to ground the club in the bunker. The SBGS wrote to the R&A Rules Secretary, ... just within days of us writing, the Rules Secretary actually rang me here and said, ‘Thanks for the letter’ and he said, ‘I’m gonna actually convene the Rules Committee’. I was flabbergasted! [SM laughs] They were convening the R&A Rules Committee to consider a local rule for blind golf. I was absolutely

dumbstruck. I thought this was absolutely phenomenal that the R&A just took this so seriously, that they brought their full Rules Committee into draw a local rule up for us. And, you know, that again was one of the major highlights ... cos as I say this was the early days. There was so many knock-backs along the way.

I would like to make two key points raised by this quotation; the first point is concerned with impairment effects and the second related to how the R&A responded to their request.

So firstly, this situation links to the role of 'impairment effects' for blind golfers. As the above quotation states, the Rules of Golf maintained that golfers – who were assumed to be sighted – were not allowed to place their golf club on the ground when in a 'hazard' (for example, a sand bunker on the golf course). The blind golfers recognised that due to their visual impairment, this needed to be changed; they needed to be able to feel the golf club on the ground behind the golf ball in order to be able to play a golf shot. As Craig told me, "*if we weren't allowed to ground the club at all times, we wouldn't know where the ball was*" (Field Notes 05). This is particularly relevant for totally blind players, but a rule change was necessary for all players regardless of their level and extent of visual impairment. As Duncan explains:

Duncan *when you go blind, distance differentiation goes, even to three feet away from you. You know, from your hand to the ground, I've no idea how far that is. When you're playing from the grass, or on a tee, you do know how far it is because you can touch the ground with a club, but when you can't, as a guide - you know picture yourself in or at the back of a bunker trying to tell me or Robert or Chris, 'Nope, you're too close to the ball Chris. You'll need to move it back an inch. No that was two inches, move it forward an inch'. Cos what's an inch three feet away from you? You know, cos you move your hand an inch and the club moves three. So you need to be able to ground your club in any hazard.*

The importance of being able to touch the ground with the golf club at all times for blind golfers previously had not been included in the Rules of Golf. This impairment effect therefore gave rise to disability when blind golfers were not permitted to ground their club in a hazard before the Rules of Golf were changed.

Secondly, The R&A responded 'favourably' and had taken their request 'seriously'. Given other negative reactions to blind golf during its development it is

not surprising that the above interviewee treated their response with amazement. It was only in 1997, however, that the R&A formally produced 'A Modification of the Rules of Golf for Golfers with Disabilities', which is published in a separate 'modified' Rules of Golf booklet rather than included in the 'normal' Rules of Golf. This change to the Rules was not about challenging ableism in golf, but was a willingness to make a 'technical' change for blind golfers as well as wheelchair golfers, amputee golfers, golfers using canes or crutches and golfers with learning disabilities. The way in which the R&A responded suggests, therefore, their enthusiasm for 'individual adjustment'; they may not have responded so quickly and with such readiness to a request for long-term social change within golf that challenges different levels of barriers to disabled people's participation in, and access to, the game. Whilst golf is 'technically' accessible to blind golfers, disabling social relations that discriminate against blind golfers remain intact. As Imrie (2001, p.235) contends, technical changes must happen at the same time as overturning social values and attitudes that serve to marginalise and discriminate against disabled people (see also chapter two). The response of the R&A highlights that disabled people are still 'out of place'; they are excluded from the rules for the dominant group and in so doing are kept 'in their place' at the margins of the sport.

This section has discussed the history and development of blind golf in Scotland. I have argued that blind golfers began as an excluded group outwith the sport. Their presence was transgressive and they moved to a position where they negotiated a place within golf as an organisation of, and for, blind people. This section has provided a more 'official' story of the organisation of blind golf. Of equal importance, however, is an analysis of the emergence of blind golf in the stories of the players and how they became involved. This chapter now moves from this organisational journey into blind golf, to personal experiences of access to golf through membership of the SBGS.

4.3 Personal journeys into blind golf

SBGS members demonstrate varied routes into blind golf, as many were in different positions and circumstances before joining the SBGS. The variegated stories about how they first heard about the SBGS and joined blind golf, demonstrates the diversity among participants (as discussed in chapters two and three). For example, some had been sighted golfers before, others had never played golf before joining, and some were members of a local golf club whilst others were not. A similar theme cutting across their varied experiences, however, is the impact of subtle exclusionary processes on their access to the game.

Being excluded: challenging the perceived impossibility of blind golf

Time and again the SBGS and its members have encountered the assumption that 'blind people can't and don't play golf', especially in reactions of disbelief to the very notion of 'blind golf'. In order to attract financial support for the development of blind golf, the SBGS wrote letters to various companies. Calum recalls these letters being treated as 'some kind of joke' with companies writing back in disbelief that they were truly asking for support to develop *blind* golf:

Calum when we first got ourselves established, we started writing to companies and the companies wrote back saying, 'Okay. The joke's on us. What you really after?' kind of thing.

This notion that 'blind people can't and don't play golf' is also linked to medical model ideas of disability, where disabled people are thought of as unable to participate fully in society due to their impairment. The dominant perception, therefore, is that it must be impossible for visually impaired and blind people to play golf because they 'cannot see' the golf ball. This attitude moulds the social space of golf as a place for sighted golfers, and in so doing blind people are made to feel 'out of place', which in turn signals to them that this is not a space they can access.

A key barrier experienced by many SBGS members was the internalisation of this oppressive attitude towards the idea of blind people playing golf. As Morris (1991 p.21) argues:

One of the biggest problems for disabled people is that all these undermining messages, which we receive every day of our lives from the non-disabled world that surrounds us, become part of our way of thinking about ourselves and/or our way of thinking about other disabled people.

For some, the attitude that 'blind people can't and don't play golf' becomes internalised as 'how can I play golf if I'm blind?' Combined with a lack of awareness of blind golf, many participants told me that although they had been sighted golfers, they had given up playing golf when their sight became impaired. On stopping playing golf, there was usually a subsequent time lag before starting again through the SBGS. This attitude was also evident among players who had not been sighted golfers before. David, for example, was adventitiously blind and Chris was born with a visual impairment; neither had played golf as a sighted player. Both David and Chris had initially considered golf as a game exclusively for sighted people. David states that once he found out he was losing his sight, *'by that time eh, I'd more or less given up on the idea of playing golf'*. Chris explained when his son had asked him to play golf, his initial response was, *'I can't do it. I can't see the ball'*. These exclusionary processes are so subtle that it becomes taken-for-granted and 'natural' for blind people to be excluded from golf; these participants came to 'know their place' due to the ideological messages inscribed in the social space of golf (Cresswell, 1996; Kitchin, 1998 p.351).

To take a more detailed example, Stevie initially gave up playing golf before finding out about the SBGS. Stevie was born sighted and played golf from his early teens. His sight deteriorated in his early 40s, and one day he was golfing with his workmates when he realised he was starting to lose sight of the ball:

Stevie I went on [golf] outings with them [friends from work] and it was just then that, well about 1980, '79, '80 either, I started losing sight of the ball, just for a moment and then I'd see it again. As I wis playin' wi' one of the guys, I says, 'Where's that one gone?' He says, 'You blind? It's there, plain as daylight'. ... I just progressively got worse and then I stopped playing and then eventually had to stop driving.

Stevie assumed golf was something he had to give up when he was blind, just like his driving licence. This attitudinal barrier stopped him from playing golf as a blind

person until a professional intermediary told him about the SBGS. Even when Stevie first heard about *blind golf*, his initial reaction was:

Stevie first I heard of Scottish blind golf was The Eye Pavilion [the eye hospital based in Edinburgh]. I just laughed at the guy. I said, 'Blind golf?! How can you play if you're blind? Don't be stupid!' He said, 'There is! Honestly.'

He expressed disbelief that blind people played golf and thought it was some sort of joke – similar to the companies the SBGS wrote to ask for financial support. As I have already noted, this is a common reaction towards the idea of blind people playing golf. Indeed, during one of my first courses as a PhD student, I introduced my research to the group only to have one student burst out laughing in disbelief that there was such a thing as blind golf. I have often experienced this reaction to the topic of my research.

There is a danger of assuming fixed positions in this argument and ascribing false consciousness to people. Such an argument would describe the blind golfers as either internalising disabling barriers or not. Cresswell (1996) argues that there are always moments of transgression in the 'taken-for-granted order of things', as he suggests that "hegemonies are contested in everyday life" (Cresswell, 1996 p.21). The personal journeys into blind golf exemplify moments where the taken-for-granted 'out of placeness' of blind people is not unconsciously accepted and alternatives to the established norm arise. Dereck, for example, assumed that it was impossible for blind people to play golf until his Disability Resource Officer challenged this viewpoint because she had heard of the SBGS:

Dereck Well, I've always had an interest in golf. When I was a wee laddie I used to play golf, but I was never very good at it and that was because my eyesight at that time was no very good, but I didnae realise that I had a visual problem. So I gave it up as a bad joke and later on, when I had to retire from my work, I was at a loose end, and eh I like the garden and things like that, but there was still something missin'. So when the disability resource officer came to visit me, you know, to put the wee buttons on the cooker and the washing machine and things like that, we just happened to by chance get onto the subject of hobbies. And I said, 'I used to play golf and I know that's an impossibility now but', and then she stopped me at the but and she says, 'why?' and I said 'well how can I play golf if I've got an eyesight problem?' So she then went on to tell me about The Blind Golf Society and then she put me in touch with them.

Such actions can uphold these exclusionary processes and facilitate the inclusion of blind people in the sport. The golfers were never weighed down by false consciousness, but negotiated the complexities of what it feels like to be 'out of place' as well as the politics of being 'out of place'. The participants can, and do, realise that they can access the sport and that the perceived impossibility of blind golf is a boundary that can be crossed.

The SBGS have also recognised that this significant barrier to participation can be challenged. Since its creation, the SBGS has made substantial efforts to do so through promoting golf as a sport that visually impaired people can, and do, play - or what they call 'spreading the word'. Through distributing information about the SBGS at every golf club and driving range in Scotland, promoting blind golf on television, in radio and newspapers including talking newspapers, contacting blind societies throughout Scotland and sports organisations such as sportscotland or Scottish Disability Sport and so on, the SBGS is proactive in raising awareness of blind golf. These are just some of the activities the SBGS undertake in order to increase their membership and challenge the exclusion of blind people from golf.

The following golfer, for example, demonstrates how the implementation of this policy challenged his expectations that he was unable to access golf as a blind person. Robert assumed that his golfing days were over because he was going blind. Having played golf as a teenager, he stopped playing in his late 40s and early 50s because he had changed to a different job that was not conducive to playing much sport. He planned to play again on retirement, yet when this time came he was already registered blind. He was unaware that blind people could and do play golf and that an organised golf Society for blind people existed in his area. It was many years before Robert was provided the opportunity to play golf again. Instead, he was involved with a local blind society where he played dominoes, cards, went rambling and listened to various speakers. These were social spaces where dominant expectations of blind people implied their presence was 'in place'. Then by chance one day, he was listening to a news tape produced by this society when he heard an

SBGS member inviting any visually impaired people who were interested in golf to get in touch:

Robert *There was a visually impaired offices in [name of place] in those days ... And they had a social worker and they, not in golf, but they wanted me to come there and play dominoes and play cards and they had speakers there. ... the people at [name of place] had this news tape that came out every month and I got that. And on it, Paul's voice [a SBGS member] came on one day, inviting anyone that was interested in golf to come and get in touch with him. So [name of wife] was listening too, she said 'Why don't you?' So I phoned Paul and that's how I got involved in blind golf.*

Once the SBGS were able to form different districts in different parts of Scotland, District members were pro-active in trying to 'spread the word' through local societies and organisations. Robert is given the opportunity to participate in his chosen sport by another SBGS member, as opposed to being channelled into particular activities deemed suitable for a 'blind person' by a local society 'for the blind'.

This again shows a difference between organisations *of*, and organisations *for*, blind people as well as socio-spatial processes that create (and challenge) ableist geographies. His experience partly supports the arguments of Scott (1969) who demonstrates that agencies for blind people are responsible for creating certain roles and expectations of blind people. It was the positive promotion of golf for blind people by another blind person that stimulated Robert into finding out more and subsequently enabled him to re-connect with a sport that he had previously enjoyed as a sighted person. It was Robert's right to participate in golf, yet lack of opportunity and disabling socio-spatial practices had excluded him from doing so.

'Spreading the word': increasing opportunities

Whether sighted golfers before or not, participants did not always foster the attitude that 'blind people can't and don't play golf'. These golfers especially demonstrate that there is always transgression despite the creation of golf as a 'non-disabled' space. For instance, some participants who were sighted golfers did not give up playing after the onset of their visual impairment; in this context, joining the SBGS is a way of increasing their opportunities to play golf. Duncan, for example,

was a sighted golfer before he became blind. He played regularly at his local golf club with other members. As an adventitiously blind person, he continued to play golf with his mates and participate in competitions. He joined the SBGS about one year after losing his sight and describes blind golf as providing additional opportunities to participate in the game:

Duncan *I lost my sight in March/April 96, from March/April through to sort of June, and from June to October it kind of settled down to more or less the level it's at now. So, I joined the blind golf Society, or Scottish Blind Golf, in early '97 having been directed that way by people at my golf club as another avenue for me to continue playing in the game. I have to say that I was extremely lucky, both in - corny as this bit always sounds! - in the friends that I had who didn't let me stop. Em, I used to play medals every week on a Sunday and whichever Wednesday we could get back to the club in time from where we all worked at the time. And when I was losing the sight, and my game was going to pieces, which you can understand it did for a while, then after Sunday's disaster, put the names down for the next week: 'Coming next week?' 'Och, I'll see'. Phoned up on Saturday, 'Are you okay for tomorrow?' 'Och, you guys just go up, you know, you play in the medal, I'll stay at home this weekend'. 'Och we'll just all have a bounce game'. You know, they wouldn't let me stop [cloughs to clear throat] which not everybody is that lucky ... So my introduction to blind golf was when I was still playing club golf, and I went to a [blind golf] match in Fife and I played with the then Secretary/Captain ... So I almost gave up the game, but due to good friends and help in the club, didn't.*

Not all blind golfers in this position do decide to get involved with the SBGS. There are probably a number of golfers in Scotland who fall into this category whereby they have played golf before losing their sight and simply continue participating in their local club with their friends. Whether playing in a 'mainstream' golf club, or accessing golf through the SBGS, Duncan's experience demonstrates the inclusionary processes that facilitated his sustained participation in golf. His golf club and friends, for instance, assumed that he could continue playing golf as a blind person; had they adopted the attitude of 'how can you play golf if you're blind' then Duncan may have become excluded from the game and made to feel 'out of place' like those participants in the above section.

Likewise Gus participated in golf as a blind golfer before joining the SBGS and exemplifies a similar transgression:

Gus *I used tae play wi' the Seniors at [name of golf course] before I'd even hearda blind golf and eh, they use tae watch ma ba' for me. Then we were sittin' wan [=one] day efter the - we'd only played aboot 12 holes - and we were sittin'*

wan day in the clubhouse after a round and we were havin' a drink and one of the boys come up, 'Seen some programme last night Gus?' 'How what wis that?' 'On blind golf' 'You what?!', I sais. I said 'whit?' 'Blind golf. You wanta seen this'. And then, 'Oh I'm sorry Gus, I didnae mean nothin by that' he sais, 'I forgot'. 'That's awright' I sais, 'What ye on aboot?' So he telt me. He sais, 'On STV last night'. I said, 'Oh wis it? I'll find out aboot that when I go up the road'. So I came hame, [name of daughter] wis here, I said tae her, I sais, 'Eh, phone up the STV'. I sais, 'I want tae talk tae them aboot blind golf'.

The SBGS' policy of 'spreading the word' through a variety of different media encouraged Gus to contact the SBGS and thus increase his opportunities to play golf. He never assumed, however, that being blind excluded him from participating. As with many of the golfers, Gus illustrates a key point that blind golf is entered through self-discovery and choice rather than rehabilitative measures. Given the origins of disability sport in rehabilitation programmes, as discussed in chapter two, it is significant that the history and development of blind golf has not been used as a method of rehabilitative treatment for blind people by medical professionals. The SBGS emerged from blind people, for blind people, who wanted to participate on their terms. Although the SBGS has used the discourse of rehabilitation in its constitution, the majority of players have not accessed the game through a rehabilitative route or describe their participation through the language of rehabilitation (although I discuss this further in chapter six). Golf is not considered to be a rehabilitation sport for blind people, because the predominant view is that – as I have already argued – golf is not considered to be a sport that blind people can play in any circumstances.

In a similar vein to Duncan, Colin had golfed for a long time before becoming visually impaired and continued to play golf at his local club as a blind golfer. He explains his transition into blind golf through the SBGS:

SM *So how did you first hear about the SBGS then, how did you em?*

Colin *Well, I'd heard - I was registered in the February of [pauses to think] '99, [pauses again] 2000. I was registered in the February of 2000 and I'd been makin' enquiries, but there was nobody up in this area actually knew [about blind golf]. But there was somebody, there was something and I'd seen a few adverts, I think it was a Callaway advert where there was one guy who was a B1, an American and I'd seen that advert and I thought, 'Well okay there must be somewhere, blind golf' as far as I knew, but I didn't know if it was, if you had to be blind. Because I'd just been*

registered, I didn't know that 95% of people are visually impaired rather than, only 5% are totally blind. But anyway, what I did then was that I inquired all around this area but the [local] Blind Society didn't know anything about blind golf. Unfortunately, I didn't get any answers. But I went to a [rehabilitation] centre [in central Scotland] ... I was down doing a live-in, 5-day live-in course ... it was there I mentioned I played golf and one of the, it was one of the guys told me [about the SBGS] So I actually met [the Secretary of the SBGS] in the pub one night ... And he give me all the bumph then.

Even though he was aware that blind people could play golf, and that there may be other blind golfers in Scotland, the lack of awareness and available information about blind golf posed a problem. It took Colin the best part of a year to find out about the SBGS. Although professional intermediaries have proved important to some of the blind golfers' stories of accessing blind golf, other professionals – such as the lack of information on blind golf at his local Society for blind people – seem unaware of the SBGS. Like others, he learned of the SBGS from another blind person, whilst on a course attended by blind people. Interestingly, Colin's excerpt raises a slightly different aspect to the attitudinal barriers previously discussed. His stereotypical assumption about blindness, that he thought he would have to be totally blind, made him question whether he would be 'eligible' to play 'blind golf' more 'formally' through the SBGS (chapter six will deal with the issues over blind identities that this assumption throws up). What constitutes who is 'in place' and 'out of place' extends beyond unequal power relations in golf between sighted and blind people or access to information and so on; it is also connected to taken-for-granted assumptions about blind identities.

Nick further exemplifies the complicated and dynamic processes of in/exclusion that influence blind people's access to golf. Nick was born sighted, but had never thought about playing golf until he was blind, and was encouraged to take up golf after meeting another SBGS member:

Nick I'd never actually played golf before I was registered as blind. ... eh [when] I went for me first guide dog - sorry second guide dog - on the course, I met another blind guy and we were sittin' natterin' after our trainin' one day and he said, 'Have you ever played the golf?' Never touched a club in me life. Never even particularly fancied playin' the game. So, eh at that time me eyesight was enough to be able to sit and watch television. So he brought in a video and there was around about half a dozen golfers and a couple of guides just showin' how the golf was done, how it was

played, what assistance the guides gave - things like that. ... [I] joined the local district ... and sorta went on from there.

Golf was not a sport that Nick had considered at any stage in his life, whether a blind person or not, and when the opportunity to play golf was given to him, he did not react with disbelief or amazement that blind people were golfers. As a working-class man, perhaps Nick's reasons for not considering this sport were linked more to his class position than ableism. Even in Scotland, where there are more public opportunities to participate in golf than other parts of the UK (Price, 1999), the sport continues to project an elitist class image (Lowerson, 1994; Stoddart, 1990) as well as being 'able-bodiest' (Maas and Hasbrook, 2001). This is also indicative of the golfers' multiple identities and positions in relation to golf and thus their personal experiences of accessing the game, which calls for a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes in/exclusion.

Continuing impediments

The above sections have shown the way in which disablist attitudes impact upon blind people's access to golf. The actions of blind golfers and the SBGS, however, transgress and resist these attitudinal barriers. Despite gaining access to the sport, there are continuing impediments that hinder blind golfers' full and equal participation in the game. Although this argument is developed further in the final section, this sub-section discusses a regular barrier that is concerned with the availability of people to guide.

As noted in the chapter one, blind people require assistance from a sighted person to act as a guide. If the players do not have a guide then they cannot participate in golf, whether a club competition, SBGS event or a 'bounce game'. Although the player-guide relationship is discussed in detail in the following chapter, my point here is to emphasise that SBGS members often experience a shortage of guides. They experience this barrier in different ways because some members have a regular guide, whereas others do not (for more detail see section 5.2). The increasing number of SBGS fixtures over the years has added to the problems of finding people to guide:

Nick Now that we've so many fixtures, it's one of the most difficult things [i.e. finding a guide]. There's never a competition – whether it be a player-guide, a qualifying event, or especially one of the majors [i.e. national and international tournaments such as the British Blind Masters] – where at least 2 or 3 of our members for whatever reason, are strugglin' for a guide.

The majority of players set up their own guides, but the SBGS or the local District Society may try and help to organise guides for players who have been unable to do so. Chris told me that, *'If you can't get a guide, sometimes the SBGS will arrange a guide, or whatever. Sometimes you've got tae rely on a guide at the place you're goin'*. At one blind golf event, for example, I observed the impact of a shortage of guides because the guides that had been organised failed to turn up:

When we arrived at the course, we dumped our golf stuff in the locker rooms and then went to have a seat in the lounge/bar for tea, coffee and bacon rolls etc. We were told that there was a problem today, because [name of golf club] have not supplied the guides they promised – so there was a shortage of guides. ... Pat announced to everyone that they were still 5 guides short, but were still trying to phone some people to see if they could guide ... I was sitting next to Gary and Robert, both of whom were depending on [local golf club] members to guide for them today. Gary said, 'och, I dinnae mind, I'll jist walk roond' but you could tell that he was disappointed. The District Captain then made an announcement to ask if there were any guides here who would mind guiding for two players at the same time (Field Notes, 06).

At this event, some guided for two players at the same time in order for the golfers to compete in this Order of Merit event.

Although many participants have difficulty a finding a guide and do not have access to a support network, Nick has a network of guides that is effective most of the time, but still poses an ongoing hindrance to his participation:

Nick The 5 of 6 people that I personally use on a regular basis, every one of them has got their own work, their own golf and their own family commitments. So you've gotta be really very good at jugglin' things about and plannin' well ahead to get those, to get the guides available ... you've got to have a good core of people that, you know, you can phone up a lot of them at short notice.

In a similar vein, Vasey (1996) highlights the advance planning and organisation necessary for her to receive responsive help, and the network of assistants she manages so that help is there when she requires it. Nick's comment, however, is in the context of participation in blind golf events. The golfers may also find it difficult

to find someone to guide in their local golf club medal, or may not be able to play as much golf as they would like beyond organised competitions, because they need to arrange for a guide. They might be included, albeit with certain impediments, in the spaces of blind golf, but remain excluded from other spaces of golf.

One interviewee, for example, explained that initially it was hard to establish networks and become involved in his local golf club as opposed to SBGS events:

Calum *Eh, the first three years I was a member there I really struggled to get a game cos I really found a difficulty in trying to find somebody that wis gonna take me out. And that was a real problem and, you know, it could've been made easier.*

Calum further describes his experience of this barrier:

Calum *you've got members – and I would include myself in that category – who have the opportunity to play a private course, a difficult course with the support and help of individuals that em, that I personally have developed. ... If I go to play golf, it's about me arranging that, it's about me paying for that, it's about me doing everything to do with it. ... if I'm gonna take part on a level playing field em, the onus is still on me to make those arrangements. Now, if I was a fully sighted person, I wouldnae be makin' any arrangements. I would turn up and play. That would be it. But as a visually impaired person, I cannae do that. Everything has got to be planned to the last detail [Calum coughs to clear his throat] arranging when I'll meet people, where I'll meet people, so that we find each other and stuff like that, as well you know. [Name of Calum's golf club]'s a fairly big clubhouse, it's got three bars in it, so em, you know if you're in there havin' a coffee, you know it's easy for somebody to be sittin' in the other bar.*

To place this story in its wider context, Calum thought there should be better opportunities for blind people to participate in their local golf club whether a club competition, an informal game of golf, or to access practice facilities to improve their game. Chouinard (1997, p.380-381) argues that social barriers to the participation of disabled people in everyday life keep them 'in their place', "at the margins of social space". This barrier to Calum's participation can likewise be interpreted as marginalising and excluding him from full and equal participation in his golf club. Different players, of course, experience this hindrance differently because the above examples have also shown that there are golfers who were sighted members at a golf club before becoming blind; these golfers have already been able to form a network of friends and other golfers who could guide them in local club events.

Although Calum has a support network within the club now, he believes that having the ability to pay someone to act as a guide would help make golf more accessible to blind players. The financial resources to pay for this assistance should not be met by the blind player, but *“an income could be obtained that would support players like me cos I would love to be able to pay – not somebody to caddy at a caddying rate – but for somebody just to spot the ball, right?”* Currently, Calum buys a fellow club member a pint, or their meal, or some golf balls and so on, if he has required their assistance. Calum’s perspective is similar to arguments put forth by disability scholars on independent living. Vasey (1996, p.87) argues that “disabled people cannot rely on friends and volunteers for the help they need – we must be able to pay for it and be in control of our day-to-day lives and independent of those around us”. I discuss the way help is given and experienced further in chapter five – including issues of independence/dependence and choice, control and autonomy for the player. Despite differences amongst the players’ experiences, however, this subsection has argued that the poor availability of people to guide still forms a significant barrier to the extent of their participation in the game.

4.4 Encounters in the golfing landscape

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 have shown the ways in which exclusionary practices have been transgressed and challenged to enable (some) blind people access to the social space of golf. To a certain degree, the SBGS and its members have moved from outwith golf to become included in the sport. These actions have challenged the production of golfing spaces as ‘non-disabled’. I have, however, hinted at a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes in/exclusion and the above subsection in particular has demonstrated that accessing the sport in itself is not the endpoint to celebrate an overturning of ableist geographies. For instance, does their access mean that they are no longer treated as ‘out of place’? And what does this transgression mean to their ongoing participation in the sport? In this section I consider particular reactions to the presence of blind people in golf, which I argue further hinder their full and equal participation in the game.

Cresswell contends that places are given meaning “through our actions in it – by “practice” – and through our reactions to this practice” (Cresswell, 1996 p.16) and that our actions are influenced by taken-for-granted ideas, beliefs, expectations about behaviour and so on. The actions towards, and reactions to, the presence of blind golfers is important to analyse because: “Transgression, and the reaction to it, underlines those values that are considered correct and appropriate” (Cresswell, 1996 p.21). It is through the practices of blind and sighted golfers that the social space of golf is most explicitly exposed and given meaning as a ‘non-disabled space’. In this section, therefore, I further argue that encounters between blind and sighted people in the golfing landscape are shaped by ableism and ableist practices, which in turn constitute who is ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’. As Kitchin (1998) notes, such practices create spatialities that work to regulate, marginalise and oppress disabled people.

There is a fine line between people responding in disbelief that blind people play golf - or refusing to believe that blind golf exists, instead treating it as a joking remark - and reactions to blind golf as ‘amazing’. Because golf is constructed as a sport by, and for, sighted people, the notion of visually impaired people participating in the sport is treated as either ridiculous or amazing. Remarks made by other golfers, for example, are dominated by adjectives such as ‘fantastic’, ‘wonderful’, and ‘amazing’:

Robert hit a 5 iron in close to the pin, and his guide said to me, ‘I can hardly do that, and I can see!’ ... The member they were teamed up with said to me that he thought it was ‘amazing’ that all these blind golfers were playing. (Field Notes 05)

There was a group of three members (all sighted golfers) waiting to tee off by the side of the first tee. I spoke with them and explained why we were running late. ... They said that there was no problem and one of the golfers said that he just thought it was “fantastic” that they (i.e. blind people) were playing golf. (Field Notes 05)

The blind golfers are often treated as ‘supercrrips’. This is a popular stereotype of disabled people that can shape encounters between sighted golfers and SBGS members. Beth Haller (2000) argues that this stereotype is damaging because it reinforces the notion that disabled people are deviant, so that it becomes ‘amazing’

for a disabled person to excel in their chosen sport. In her analysis of the way media stories framed disabled golfer Casey Martin, she contends that society's expectation of disabled people is so low that anything they do beyond just daily living - in Martin's case competing as a professional golfer - is considered to be a tremendous feat. Indeed, media articles of blind golf sanction this reaction since it dominates the way in which blind golf is written about in the popular press with headlines such as 'Blind golfers amaze Ronnie Corbett' (Farquharson, 2001 p.8-9). This is linked, of course, to cultural representations of disabled people that assume disabled persons are passive and pitiable, and dominated by disabling images that are patronising and demeaning (Morris, 1991; Shakespeare, 1994). Both the remarks made by sighted golfers and the language used in media reactions implies that the actions of this marginalised group of blind golfers are 'out of place'.

The golfers' reactions to these descriptions are not always explicit. During our interview, Robert discussed an example where a guide had told him that:

Robert *He said, 'I think it's remarkable how you can play the game, in so few shots, you know, not being able to see the ball at all, or your hands or your feet'.*

As I had observed the way other people had reacted towards Robert in the above situation, I asked him how he felt about being described as 'remarkable'. He explained that:

Robert *Well, I get embarrassed. I get embarrassed. I said, No, no' I said, 'Just one of those things'.*

At one International match, the patronising and sympathetic attitude towards blind golfers was central to the speech delivered by the host golf club Captain:

Basically the Captain commented upon how 'wonderful' the blind golfers were to continue playing the game on losing their sight (he was assuming of course that all the golfers began golfing as sighted players which is not the case). He then went on to say how [name of golf club] had a blind golfer of 'their own') and how 'proud' he was of this player who was a good golfer before losing his sight, and continues to play the game as a 'partially blind player' (the Captain's phrase). He said that the 'valiance and courage which he has seen with his golfing friend meant that he was very proud of him, and that [name of golf club] were very proud of all of you here today' (Field Notes 06).

After the speech there were no reactions or comments from the golfers about any of the remarks that the Captain made about their 'valiance' and 'courage'. As I

mentioned in the opening section, the SBGS is not a radical disability organisation that fully adopts a rights perspective based on a social model of disability. The golfers are politicised to a certain degree, but few expressed their dissatisfaction openly with these kinds of disabling attitudes. It is likely that the golfers need to keep quiet because they need access to the golf course and therefore want to get invited back again. So they are aware of being treated as 'out of place', but also need to maintain *some* kind of place within the game, which is in on the margins of the sport.

Linked to reactions of 'amazement' and so on, are assumptions over blind people's ability to be 'good golfers'. Section 2.4 outlined ableist assumptions about what and/or who makes a 'good golfer'. Some sighted golfers hold low expectations about the standard of blind golfers:

The professional started to ask me some questions about the golfers. He said that he had a friend who guides occasionally with the Society and so he had been interested in watching the golfers hit shots from the first tee. The pro shop had a big glass window which looked out over the first tee. He asked me, 'they can't all be blind, like that guy in the blue shirt, what can he see?' I replied that I had no idea what Keith could, or couldn't see, but that yes, they were in fact all registered blind. The professional continued, 'but he hits the ball really well, surely he can't be that blind?' (Field Notes 08)

Whilst this golf professional did not react with 'amazement' that blind people could and do play golf, his attitude was one of surprise that a blind golfer could 'hit the golf ball really well'. Keith did not meet his stereotypical assumption that blind people were incapable of being 'good golfers'. He transgressed the expected behaviour of a blind person playing golf, which exposed the golf professional's taken-for-granted assumptions. Of course, not all blind golfers are 'good golfers', just like not all sighted golfers are 'good golfers', but it is the assumption and expectation that blind people will not be able to play golf well *because they are blind* that shapes this attitude and reactions towards blind golfers.

This is illustrative of the dynamics between disabled and non-disabled people, where disabled people are treated as inferior and incapable and these disabling socio-spatial practices impact upon disabled people's experiences of being

in public space (see also Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Chouinard, 1997; Keith, 1996). For example, Chouinard (1997; see also Chouinard and Grant, 1995) argues that 'being out of place' also finds its expression in workplaces such as the privileged spaces of academia. She states: "barriers are constructed through social practices in workplaces that devalue the presence and contributions of persons with disabilities" (Chouinard, 1997 p.381). This raises connections to the treatment of women in golf; female golfing bodies are often treated as less capable and inferior to male golfers (McEwan, 2002). Thus, female golfers experience similar reactions of surprise and fascination at how well they can play, which patronise and demean their participation in the game. Informal actions and remarks were also found to be an effective way of making women golfers feel 'out of place' and thus policing the borders of gendered spaces in golf (McEwan, 2002; see also Longhurst, 1995 in relation to pregnant women's participation in sport). More recently, Kim England (2003) has argued that social justice in the workplace is more than the numbers of disabled people who have accessed the labour market; it involves the creation of a workplace that confronts discriminatory attitudes and practices so that disabled employees have a sense of being valued and respected. England's (2003) study of Canadian banking, therefore, found that the quality of social relationships was as important as the numerical representation of disabled people and their occupational distribution. The participants might enjoy access to golf, but their relationships with other sighted golfers suggest that they continue to experience discriminatory disabling barriers.

As well as regular patronising remarks and expectations, the blind golfers also become a site of (unwanted) attention and curiosity, with their presence treated as some kind of unusual spectacle:

I was sitting near to a couple of (sighted) golfers who were at [name of golf club] for a game as visitors. They were watching some of the blind golfers on the third green from the lounge window and also Chris and David's match tee off the first. They were trying to work out the extent of the visual impairment of the golfers saying, 'most of them must just be partially blind'. As I was at the table next to them, on the guys asked me: 'are they blind or partially blind?' I replied to him that most of the golfers here today were registered blind, but that there are varying degrees of blindness amongst the golfers. ... This person continued to say that he thinks it's brilliant that they're playing golf, and that it must get them out the house, 'I think it's brilliant'. (Field Notes 08)

The sighted golfers' ableist assumptions and expectations about what and who is 'in place' or 'out of place' are telling. His focus is that blind people are *on a golf course*, rather than *in their house*. The 'sight' of blind people on a golf course is 'unusual' or 'un-natural' because it transgresses *where* this sighted golfer has taken-for-granted that blind people should be.

The assumption that it is 'brilliant' and 'wonderful' that blind people play golf further implies that their quality of life as a disabled person must be awful and tragic (Morris, 1991). Because the golfers are objectified and pitied, this often leads sighted golfers to explain how 'lucky' watching blind people playing golf makes them feel, or how 'humbled':

Margaret then started to comment on 'how humbling it is to watch the blind golfers, how wonderful they are and how it's amazing' ... [she] then went on to say, 'how we complain about this and that, but these blind people never complain. It just makes you think about how lucky you are' (Field Notes 08)

These sympathetic reactions demonstrate that the tragedy model of disability remains a powerful discourse, which shapes interactions between blind and sighted people in golf. Blindness is viewed as an individual tragedy, and leads people like Margaret to feel sorry for blind golfers. The powerful and enduring discourse of the medical model of disability was demonstrated during a presentation to a local society of (mainly) retired businessman about blind golf given by one of the blind golfers:

The President [of the Society] after the talk said that he was 'amazed' to learn that Mike was born blind and that 'he has done so well to overcome his disability'. Previously he had asked how I got involved, and if I had a family member that was 'afflicted'. People just don't have the language available to describe things in a different way. In giving thanks to Mike for his presentation, he told the audience he was sure they would be 'humbled' like him to hear about blind people playing golf and think about how 'lucky' they are ... I managed to speak with Mike very briefly about this afterwards and he said that 'oh you get it all the time'. I just couldn't believe that they would still think like this because regardless of the way in which Mike had put across blindness issues, blind golf and the way he spoke about them, and represented them a completely different way from which they were consumed, it just didn't get through. Mike didn't portray the golfers as supercrips and he certainly didn't talk about how he overcame his disability.

This member of the audience continued to use the language of the medical model of disability, and present disability as a 'tragedy' to be 'overcome', even though Mike had given a different experience of being a blind person and a blind golfer.

As I stated above, the boundaries of who is 'in place' or 'out of place' are influenced by dominant discourses surrounding disability. Visually impaired and blind people are frequently portrayed as 'sinister and evil', as objects of ridicule, or pitiable and pathetic (French, Gillman and Swain, 1997 p.14), or ignorant and dependent (Kleege, 1999 p.21). As Scott (1969 p.4) argues:

The blind (sic) are assumed to be frustrated, cursing their darkness as they reflect back to the days when they could see. They are thought to be helpless, and their abilities are questioned at every turn. It is believed that there are few things a blind man can do for himself (sic), and his mental void precludes any real intellectual development, and performance. Helplessness, dependency, melancholy, docility, gravity of inner thought, aestheticism – these are the things that commonsense views tell us to expect of the blind.

This links to medical model understandings of disability since these assumptions also hold that it is blindness that makes blind men this way: "To be unable to see is to be helpless, to live in perpetual darkness is to be melancholic, blindness is dependence and so on" (Scott, 1969 p.4). Developing an interactionist perspective, Scott (1969) demonstrates how agencies responsible for the education and training of people labelled 'blind' contribute to the production of these disabling images of a 'blind person'. These depictions of blindness and blind people are mobilised through interactions between blind and sighted people in the golfing landscape.

The following example, for instance, demonstrates the way in which the blind golfers are treated like children, incapable of making and taking decisions for themselves:

Cameron got a golf ball out and asked his guide if it was a good one. His guide said that it was a bit tattie and he should maybe get another one to play with. I added, saying to Cameron that his golf ball had a big cut on the skin of the golf ball. Cameron promptly got another golf ball from his golf bag, and asked his guide again if this ball was okay, but before his guide could finish, the member took the golf ball from Cameron's hand and said to Cameron 'yeah, that one will do you'. (Field Notes 05)

These kinds of disabling encounters, especially through intrusive behaviour that is an attempt to control the blind golfers' actions and decisions, is often displayed by sighted people who help out at blind golf events as scorers or sighted members at golf clubs who are playing as part of a team with the blind golfers that day. The

infantillisation of disabled people and the treatment of the golfers as incapable, passive and dependent are significant to debates surrounding the social relations of help which I discuss further in the following chapter. This devalues their presence and keeps the golfers 'in their place' in the social structure of golf.

Common misconceptions and understandings of visual impairment and blindness can lead to the blind golfers being described as fraudulent. If the players transgress stereotypical expectations of what it is to be a 'blind person', or 'behave like a blind person', then this can lead other golfers to question their authenticity. The following extract from my field notes captures this common scenario:

Keith said that the more he thought about the comments that [a golf professional] had made about his sight, the more annoyed he got about it all. Chris, myself, Angus and Keith had all played a bounce game of golf together yesterday. Whilst the three of them were putting away on the practice green, [this golf professional] had called me across to ask me who Keith was. I explained that he was a friend and [the golf professional] inquired as to whether he was 'one of the blind golfers'. I said that he was. [The golf professional] then went on to question Keith's genuineness as a blind golfer, saying that he'd seen him out on the practice ground, that 'he could see 200 yards' etc. He flippantly called him a 'con' and that he wasn't a 'real blind golfer'. Again, like what I had to explain various times before, I said that I had no idea what Keith could or could not see, but that he was registered blind and needed to be guided on the golf course. [The golf professional] laughed and joked about this. I told Keith what [this golf professional] had said ... [In a train journey to a blind golf event soon after], Keith expressed how pissed off he was with [that golf professional] for making these remarks, not least because he doesn't want other people questioning whether he should qualify as a blind golfer or not. I agreed ... Keith said that he'd chatted with his wife about it and how she commented that Keith should ask [that golf professional] if he wants Keith's eyes and then he'd know all about being a blind golfer. I could understand Keith's anger and I said to Keith that I didn't understand why people like [that golf professional] have the right to question his vision and added, 'does anybody question what I can see or not? No. So why should people question and think they know all about what blind people can or cannot see'. (Field Notes 09)

Similarly, Butler and Bowlby (1997 p.428; see also French, 1999) found that some of their participants had been interpreted as 'frauds' if they had shown 'competence' in public – one of their interviewees for instance had been accused of claiming to be blind in order to gain from sporting activities with which he was involved. These assumptions and cultural representations of disabled people structure expectations of

the social behaviour and capabilities of blind golfers and create disabling socio-spatial relations.

The golfers are not passive in their responses and reactions to these remarks. Just as the first two sections demonstrated that there was resistance during organisational and personal journeys into blind golf, there are resistant practices to disabling social relations during their participation. Chris, for example, explained that the blind golfers are often challenged by golf clubs and individual sighted golfers for being 'fraudulent' and constantly having to justify their position as 'real' blind golfers. As outlined in section 4.2, the SBGS organise events between blind and sighted golfers as part of their 'integration' objective. At one of these events, Chris said that:

Chris Some are taken aback by the sight o' somey the blind golfers. I've found that out.

SM What do you mean?

Chris They thought that most of the golfers who were gonna be playin' would be totally blind. Didn't realise they would get about so well themselves. Which I found out [at one event]. They had a complaint – they actually said tae me, 'Well, we thought that there wis very few blind golfers'.

Chris immediately responded to this 'complaint' to try and counteract their ignorance:

Chris I sais, 'No', I sais, 'Blind golfers – only 2% of blind people are totally blind, registered blind people'. I sais, 'The majority have got some eyesight, or some have more than others, or different likes make it worse or whatever, but as soon as most o' them hit that ball, it's gone. They do not see it. There's only one or two who can mibbie follow it for a wee distance, but they're partially sighted, they're no' registered blind'. But I sais, 'No'. They felt taken aback, or like they'd been used a bit, but I reassured them, I sais, 'No, no'.

SM And like after you said that to them, what did they say back to you?

Chris 'Oh well', they sais, 'we didnae realise it was like that'. 'Oh aye', I sais, 'maself included'. I sais, 'I can sit here and read a letter to you under a screen – most of them can dae that'. I sais, 'there are somey them who can actually read print from hand, ordinary written, but once they hit that ball', I sais, 'it's gone. They can putt, I can putt okay on the green, a lot of them can. But there's B1s and B2s who cannot. But the majority is B3s, which is people with enough sight to enjoy the surroundings and the game itself, you know, to an extent'. But the guy didnae realise

it wis like that. But he sais, 'Oh well. That's fine then. We jist thought –'. I sais, 'No, no'.

It is not only individual blind golfers who resist these negative reactions. The SBGS as an organisation takes collective action in order to resist and overturn such disabling attitudes and stop its members experiencing these reactions:

Nick I mean the amount of clubs that we, as the SBGS, go to and say, 'Look' – we've actually got to prepare them now – we say, 'Look we've never been here before, but we've got 10 blind golfers coming. There's only three of them have no sight whatsoever. The rest will be independent enough, or confident enough, to actually walk around themselves, but just to make you aware that they are members of ours and they've all got a sight problem'. Better tellin' them that than tryin' to have to back track and do it afterwards because some of the members have got up and said, 'Here! These guys – I thought they were blind?' Em, [short pause] so you've got to watch things like that and prepare the club.

Not having met or interacted with blind people before, coupled with ignorance surrounding visual impairment and society's stereotypes of blind people, mean that golfers have to deal with these kinds of reactions on a regular basis. As Craig puts it: *"people often think you have to have a guide dog and a white stick to be blind"* (Field Notes 03). Thus the SBGS tries to improve blind golfers experiences of the social space of golf.

This section has revealed reactions to transgression in golf by the participants. To concur with Chouinard (1997, p.380; see also chapter two), these subtle and not-so-subtle reactions to disabled people "challenge their right to be, and, in particular, to in able-bodied spaces". As Morris (1991, p.25) argues, disabled people's presence in 'public' space is "dominated by stares, condescension, by pity and by hostility". The disablist organisation of space through disabling socio-spatial relations and practices maintain unequal social power relations between disabled and non-disabled people (Kitchin, 1998). In these ways, the blind golfers are marginalised within golf and their participation remains an unequal and disabling experience. They remain 'out of place' even though they have 'access' to the game. If the presence of blind people in golf were 'in place', then it would not provoke such disabling reactions, stares and remarks.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the barriers, particularly disabling attitudes, to inclusion in golf. Golf is taken-for-granted as a sport by, and for, sighted people. The development of the SBGS and the presence of blind people in the sport disrupted this established norm. This transgression questioned who is, or should be, included in golf and exposed the ableism, and ableist practices, that work to exclude blind players. In particular, I highlighted the assumption that blind people cannot, and do not, play golf, which meant that many participants never considered golf as a sport that was available to them, or gave up playing when their sight deteriorated. I therefore argued that disabling barriers to accessing golf as a blind person are mobilised through indirect and less tangible socio-spatial processes. There are no rules or laws governing golf that discriminate directly against blind people. Blind people can play golf and join a golf club. The organisational and personal journeys into blind golf demonstrated that the SBGS and blind people have negotiated access to the sport. Despite this, the participants' experiences demonstrate that there are still exclusionary practices operating that mark their presence as 'out of place' in golf. Disabling attitudes do not simply vanish once the players access their chosen sport, but are embedded in 'everyday' interactions between blind and sighted people in the golfing landscape. These informal, everyday encounters are often disabling experiences that prevent the blind golfers from equal participation in the game.

These barriers, however, continue to be challenged and resisted by the SBGS and its members. The SBGS's promotion of golf as a sport available to visually impaired and blind people is crucial in challenging dominant social attitudes towards blind golfers and thus this level of exclusion. The players are not passive recipients of patronising attitudes and stereotypes, but challenge the prejudice and ignorance towards them both individually and as a group through the SBGS. These reactions are not always explicit, however, because dominant discourses of paternalism and patronage are used to access the sport and sustain their participation. I argued that the participants were aware of being treated as 'out of place', but needed to maintain *some* kind of place within the game. A focus on socio-spatial practices, therefore, has

not presented the blind players as passive victims of marginalisation and oppression. Rather, this chapter has given emphasis to the agency of blind golfers and the way that the borders of who is 'in place' or 'out of place' do not remain static, but are constantly transgressed, contested and resisted.

This thesis continues these debates as it moves from considerations of the golfers relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf, to the inter-personal relationships between players (blind golfer) and their guide (sighted person).

5

Relations Between: negotiating the player-guide relationship

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed barriers, particularly disabling attitudes, that impact on blind people's access to, and sense of inclusion in, golf. This chapter moves on from considerations of the golfers' relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf, to the inter-personal relationships between players (blind golfers) and their guides (sighted persons). These are referred to as player-guide relationships. The player-guide relationship is pivotal to blind golf and emerged from the data as a central theme of the research. The necessity of a sighted person to act as a guide is a material reality of being a blind golfer: as one player put it, 'you can't do it without a guide'. The crux of the argument, however, lies not with visual impairment, but the ways in which help is given and experienced. The need for a guide raises key issues surrounding independence/dependence, helper/helped and thus choice, control and autonomy for the player.

There have been tensions between feminism and disability on these issues, but this chapter draws from both literatures. Disability writers have been concerned with choice, control and autonomy for the help-receiver, promoting a discourse of rights and independence (for example: Morris, 1991; 1993; Keith and Morris, 1996; Vasey, 1996). Such authors have criticised the way in which feminist literatures on 'care' have defined disabled people as 'dependents' and ignored the rights of

recipients of help. In the context of the 'children as carers' debate, for example, Keith and Morris (1996, p.90) state:

As feminists writing from a disability rights perspective we have, in the past, criticised the way that non-disabled feminist academics have defined family members and friends who provide help to older and disabled people as 'carers' and those they 'care for' as 'dependants'.

They further argue that feminist writings have tended to neglect the voices of those 'cared-for' (Keith and Morris, 1996; see also Morris, 1991; 1993; Swain, French and Cameron, 2003). The feminist challenge to the question of informal care, for instance, has been criticised by Morris (1991) who argues that it fails to take into account the opinions of disabled and older people.

In light of such criticisms, it may seem unusual to draw upon feminist theorists of 'care' to develop an understanding of the social relations of help, especially around notions of 'independence' and 'dependence'. Particular feminist writers, however, have been concerned with an ethic of 'care', deconstructing the very notions of independence and autonomy, and promoting ideas of interdependence and relational autonomy (for example: Gilligan, 1982; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Tronto, 1994). Those feminists who highlight the importance of interdependency in helping relationships are usefully woven into my analysis of the player-guide relationship. These debates, of course, are discussed in more detail at relevant points throughout the chapter. Feminist reworkings of the term 'care' are also influential to my argument, especially the definition of 'care' as a social practice (Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Tronto, 1994). This idea of 'care' is appealing because it is in keeping with the rationale for this thesis, which aims to stress the agency of blind golfers (see chapter two). Selma Sevenhuijsen (1998, p.22) explains:

care can be seen as a mode of acting in which participants perceive and interpret care needs and act upon these needs. How their interpretation and acting proceeds varies according to the situation and social and institutional contexts, and depends on a variety of factors such as norms and rules about good caring and the relational dynamics between the actors concerned.

Neither the socio-political contexts nor the rules and 'norms' are fixed (Sevenhuijsen, 1998 p.22). This notion of care as a social practice, therefore, allows for negotiations, disputes and conflicts between player and guide. Attention is given

to the 'relational dynamics' between player and guide in this chapter, taking into account the actions of both care-giver and care-receiver.

Language is central to these debates. Whether to use the word 'help' in preference to 'care' is not insignificant. There are conflicting and contested notions of 'care', which include disability studies' challenges to 'care' and feminist reworkings as highlighted above (Keith and Morris, 1996; Morris, 1991; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Shakespeare, 2000; Swain, French and Cameron, 2003; Tronto, 1994). Shakespeare (2000, p.ix) writes:

'Care' is a word which is value-laden, contested and confused, particularly in the way it combines an emotional component and a description of basic human services. There is argument as to when it is necessary, what it means, and how it should be applied. For these reasons, I have tried to avoid it wherever possible.

It could be argued that the term 'help' is equally loaded, contested and confusing, but, in particular, 'care' has connotations of 'looking after', love and personal relationships that are inappropriate given negative experiences of 'care', especially through controlling and abusive relationships which claim to be 'caring':

Although the word 'care' may be linked to warmth, closeness and love, it has also been associated with control, power and oppression (Swain, French and Cameron, 2003 p.141).

Substituting the word 'help' for 'care' does not mean that these negative experiences and abuses will disappear, yet given the particular connotations to the term 'care', the word 'help' is perhaps more appealing. This position is taken by Shakespeare (2000, p.ix), who chose the word 'help' for its simple, but extensive meaning to describe various acts of assistance in order to avoid the term 'care'.

I also find the term 'help' more appropriate for this chapter because it focuses on the social relations of help, and process of helping, pertinent to the *context of blind golf*. As this chapter will demonstrate, the player-guide relationship is multi-faceted, as well as fractured with various axes of power, and so to describe it as 'caring' relationship may be misleading. 'Help' is used in preference to 'care' to more adequately cover the diverse aspects of guiding and the multi-faceted nature of the player-guide relationship. Guides provide various acts of assistance for players,

both on and off the golf course, but are also part of a team competing in a sport. For a number of reasons, therefore, I decided to use the terms 'help' and 'helping relationships' throughout this chapter.

The chapter begins with a typology of guides and the act of guiding. This typology is shaped by discussing which people become guides, why and what roles they perform. I draw upon disability literatures to question paternalistic and patronising approaches to helping and suggest that different guides adopt - myself included - multiple and contradictory attitudes to their role. As I elaborated upon in chapter three, my collection and interpretation of data are influenced by my multiple positions, but my status as a guide – as a helper rather than the person being helped in this context – is particularly relevant here. Throughout this chapter, I remain critically reflexive about this position. In section 5.3, I examine the players' perspectives and experiences of their helper/helped relationships. This focus is deliberate since the voices of those who receive help are often neglected from discussions about help (Shakespeare, p.13, 2000) and the perspectives of the 'carer' are regularly valued over the perspectives of the 'cared-for' (Keith and Morris, 1996; Morris, 1991; Tronto, 1994). Within this section, I explore the 'power-struggles' evident in the player-guide relationship, showing how the players constantly negotiate the role of the guide and their position as blind golfers. Yet many players contend that the relationship between player and guide must be seen as a 'team'. In the final section, the argument is further developed to suggest that this is an interdependent and reciprocal relationship. This argument draws heavily from feminist theoretical perspectives on relational autonomy. I conclude, however, that the notion of a team relationship does not erase the unequal power-relations discussed in section three; rather, it is a contested, multi-faceted relationship where power struggles are constantly negotiated.

5.2 The guides and guiding

The role of the guide

Guides have different roles and functions and they perform these in two main ways: on the golf course and off the golf course. As one interviewee explains:

Nick The guide's, as I say, there to 1) get you to the course safely, get into the clubhouse, get the gear sorted out, all your golfing equipment and such like. Again, depending on your level of sight as to what degree of help you need to get there. On the course, it's the guide's job to paint the picture in your mind of what each individual hole is like.

In both roles, guiding depends upon many different factors such as the players' individual preferences and their type and level of visual impairment. The Rules of Golf also impact upon what a guide can or cannot do in this relationship on the golf course. Table 5.1 summarises the different roles the guide performs, which I have synthesised from personal experience, observations as well as asking blind golfers what their guides do. This may vary according to different players with different preferences and visual impairments.

Table 5.1 What guides do

Provide a verbal description of the golf course. Provide yardages or distances. Provide advice on club selection. Watch the golf ball and guide player to next shot. Guide the player around the golf course. Assist the player getting to the golf course. Guide the player around the clubhouse, say to toilet facilities, changing facilities, bar and so on. Read out written information such as on golf scorecards, strokesavers, or golf club menus.
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Taking the role on the golf course first, guides generally provide a verbal description of the golf course, the hole being played, the distance to the pin, advice on club selection, shot selection, then align the player to the target and so on. For instance, Gus describes the roles performed by his guide on the golf course:

Gus The role of the guide is, first and foremost, to make sure I've got everything I need on the course, I'm happy on the course. I'm happy wi' maself. Things like that.

Watch the ball, line me up behind it, give me the club, give me the yardage and then I'll ask him for a club, if he can gie me the yardage, I'll ask him for a club an' I'll try an' hit the ba' as near as possible as I kin tae that yardage. It disnae always work, sometimes it works. But eh, [pauses] we couldnae golf withoot them, it's jist as simple as that. Wi' couldnae golf withoot them. He does everythin' fur me: when it rains, he gives ma waterproofs oot ma bag, gets ma bunnet oot, gives me the ba', pegs, tees, golf clubs, glove, everythin' oot the bag. Pat brings it oot fur us. If I've got tae bring things oot, I'm searchin' through the bag lookin' fur this, lookin' fur that. Pat goes in there and has his hand on it right away, that's it. Then lines me up on the puttin' green.

Gus' guide, Pat, is providing him with relevant information, contributing to making decisions on the course and ensuring he has everything he needs and is content on the course. In this respect, their relationship is similar to that between a professional golfer and their caddy. Although many of the players' guides do not perform physical tasks such as bag-carrying, they are involved in the planning of the golf shot, decision-making on the golf course as well as sometimes reinforcing the players' confidence to commit to a certain club selection and so on. In a qualitative examination of the golfer-caddie relationship with professional caddies and professional golfers from the Australasian Professional Golfers Association Tour, for example, these aspects were considered important characteristics of the relationship (Lavallee *et al*, 2002). But the player-guide relationship extends beyond a straightforward golfer-caddie relationship because the two most important functions of a guide on the course are to guide the player around the course and to watch for the golf ball.

Players use a guide off the course too. The guide may assist the player to the golf course, guide the player around a train station, the golf clubhouse, the accommodation at a tournament and so on. Gus further explains the role of the guide beyond the actual golf course:

Gus *When we go away, anywhere - even fur the day or that. I cannae get up tae the bar and get a drink, but I gie Pat the money. Either that or I go up tae the bar wi' Pat, but he's got tae cairry it back tae the table cos if I go I'll jist bump intae somebody an' pit it all ower him. Drink, when it's dear, you dinnae want tae dae that! ... When we go away to an international, whenever we go doon tae breakfast in the mornin', Pat takes me tae a table first. Then he asks me, 'You wantin' fruit, cornflakes or whatever breakfast cereal?' Pat goes away and brings mines up tae me, then goes away fur his own. Then when we've finished that, 'You wantin' ham, egg, sausage, tomato' - whatever the breakfast is. I jist tell Pat whit I want, Pat goes*

and gets it an' brings it back. Then the waitress brings the toast, he butters the toast fur us. Pours the tea, sugars it - does literally everything. I could dae it, but it wid take a while, you know.

The player-guide relationship includes interactions between players and their guides in different spaces - from hotels, clubhouses, golf courses, train stations and so on. Because the player-guide relationship is not simply a golf relationship between a player and someone who acts like a caddy, it is necessary to analyse its multiple dimensions, which include the dynamics between guide/golfer, helper/helped, sighted/blind and so on both on the golf course and beyond.

Who become guides and why?

According to my observations as well as discussion with players and guides, I suggest that people become involved as guides in blind golf for a variety of reasons. Indeed, just as there are different routes and pathways into blind golf for blind people, so too are there for the guides. Table 5.2 describes the different kinds of people I observed who were guides. Some have entered via their own interest in doing some voluntary work, answering to SBGS leaflets calling for people to volunteer or television adverts that the Society has organised to attract more guides. Whilst some are volunteers, others are friends, work colleagues, neighbours, or fellow golfers. The majority of guides, however, are family members such as sons guiding for their fathers, parents guiding for their children, or partners and spouses. Who become guides, therefore, are often connected to the reasons why people guide, which is examined in more detail below.

Table 5.2 Who become guides

Volunteers	Spouses and partners
Sons/daughters	Parents
Friends	Neighbours
Work colleagues	Fellow golfers

Amongst those different people involved as guides in blind golf, there are different types of guides. Some people regularly guide for the same player, some people regularly guide but for different players, others guide occasionally for either

the same player or occasionally guide for different players. There is also a section of sighted golfers who only guide at blind golf events that are organised at their local golf club. This means they may guide once a year at the same event and have never met the player they will be guiding for. As discussed in the previous chapter, guides provided by local clubs on the day of an event are important given the lack of available people to guide regularly for the players. The point to emphasise, however, is that the diversity of guides and practices of guiding mean that the golfers deal with complicated social relations of help. Guides may or may not be related to them, known to them, available to guide regularly or only occasionally, their preferences may be handled well or not at all. This of course links back to section 4.3, which discussed the availability of guides, and the difficulty of managing and organising a network of support in order to access the sport.

Alongside this diversity of guides, and diversity of golfers, there are different motivations for becoming a guide. Table 5.3 outlines the varied reasons for guiding, as stated by guides during our informal conversations.

Table 5.3 Why people guide

Interested in voluntary work
Interested in golf
Because family or friend
To travel and see different courses/places
To meet new people and enjoy the social side.
Because unemployed or retired and ‘gives something to do’.
‘A day out’.
To help and ‘do-good’
For international competition
To become part of something.

In the remainder of this section, I move from these statements from guides to an analysis of the reasons they gave for becoming involved. This places what guides say in a wider social context. Although a number of competing discourses surrounding help were evident, I begin with the dominant discourse of paternalism that partly characterises why some people guide.

My own story of guiding demonstrates the dominance of paternalism in help and helping relationships in blind golf. I became involved in blind golf after picking up an SBGS leaflet at a golf driving range. I had heard about blind golf previously through the local press – The Scottish Blind Strokeplay was played at a golf course near my parental home – and thought it would be interesting to find out more. After completing the leaflet, I received a telephone call from the Secretary of East District who asked if I wanted to come along to a local event. From then on, I started guiding in local blind golf competitions. In retrospect, two things trouble me about conversations I had during this period. Firstly, other golfers (not involved with blind golf) frequently asked me why I guided - as if I had to provide a suitable 'justification' to be involved in something so 'amazing' and 'different'. Secondly, my response to this question. I responded with phrases such as, 'oh it's good to give back to my sport', or 'I really enjoy helping people access golf' and so on. My responses exemplify a 'do-gooder' helper and were constructed through paternalistic and welfarist discourses. Given the prevalence of this ideology surrounding disability (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2000), it is not altogether surprising that my first thoughts on guides and guiding were couched in such terms. This was the 'easy' response because it mobilised the most available and taken-for-granted way of thinking about my relationship to blind golf. As I discuss below, this is only one discourse which exists in parallel with others on blind golf – it is not necessarily a case of choosing either this discourse or others, because there are competing discourses, but it is certainly the one that I drew upon most frequently at this stage.

Linked to paternalistic perspectives to disability and help, some guides describe their experience of guiding as 'rewarding'. Edward, for example, explained to me that *'just because it's hard work doesn't make guiding any less enjoyable. It is a very rewarding experience. Very rewarding indeed'* (Field Notes 06). Morris told me that playing golf with, and guiding for, a blind person *'was one of the most rewarding things he's ever done'* (Field Notes 05). Helpers are often highly valued and respected in society, rewarded with medals and admiration (Shakespeare, 2000, p.23). After a promotional presentation about blind golf, led by one of the SBGS members with a short input into the presentation about the role of a guide from

myself, a member from the audience told me of his admiration for my role as a guide:

he turned to me and said about my 'dedication' to the Society as a guide, helping 'these people' and dedicating time to such a 'worthy' cause, thereby placing me in a Mother Teresa role (Field Notes 03)

This demonstrates the powerful imagery of helpers that Shakespeare (2000) has criticised. Shakespeare argues that such prevailing social attitudes towards those who help will manifest within help-givers and help-receivers. This may explain why some guides feel they have 'done good' and should be 'rewarded', and some guides feel they should 'reward' their guide with buying them dinner after the round of golf and so on. These dominant discourses also create disabled people as a burden, which disability commentators have criticised. For example, Keith and Morris (1996) provide an insightful critique of the way in which debates are framed surrounding 'young carers', where children of disabled parent(s) are said to 'suffer' from this 'burden' of informal caring. Alternatively, they argue that such representations of 'young carers' often obscure the lived experiences of both help-givers and help-receivers. Likewise, I explore alternative perspectives on guiding and the player-guide relationship.

Although guides may use these dominant notions of help and helping to convey why they became involved as a guide, and/or why they enjoy guiding, there are examples where guides do not present disabling accounts of their help. This does not suggest that some guides take up a 'Mother Teresa' position whilst others do not, but that guides move between these positions, myself included. As Tables 5.2 and 5.3 highlight, the range of people and reasons for becoming involved demonstrate that paternalistic reasons co-exist alongside other reasons such as competitiveness or companionship. For example, Phil explained to me that he became involved initially because he started guiding for his father. Since his father no longer plays, he still guides occasionally but '*only at the big events*' (*Field Notes 06*). He further revealed how much he enjoyed the competition of International events such as The British Blind Masters and The World Blind Golf Championships. This particular guide was not simply there to help, but to compete in an international stage for his own pleasure. Pat told me that he started guiding for his friend when he was retired

because it provided him with company and companionship: *'It got me oot and intae other company, met other people and we hud a good laugh as well. I enjoy goin' tae competitions an that, I do'*. This concurs with Melissa Benn's (1998) argument that people can enjoy inter-personal relationships and take pleasure from helping relationships. Guiding is about competition, friendship, family ties, socialising as well as being altruistic and do-gooding. Indeed, chapter six will further demonstrate the way in which guides enjoy the camaraderie and companionship – the pleasure of inter-personal relationships – within blind golf and thus the benefits they gain from being involved as a guide.

The welfarist and paternalistic reasons for guiding are therefore part of a mesh of different reasons why people choose to guide and sustain their involvement with blind golf. Guides may highlight paternalistic reasons for helping because it is the most pervasive discourse surrounding disability and help. Alternative perspectives on guiding are shadowed by this powerful discourse because it is not 'the norm' to discuss the reciprocal nature of helping relationships. This is connected to complex ideals and assumptions over independence and autonomy, which downplays interdependency as a vital component of human experience (French, 1993b; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Shakespeare, 2000; Tronto, 1994). This has a disabling and disempowering impact on the player-guide relationship, as discussed in the following section. As Shakespeare argues (2000, p.23), the power and status this discourse attributes to the help-giver undermines their ability to provide responsive and 'helpful' help, especially when help is provided in disempowering ways. The assumption is that guides provide help and players receive help; yet the practice of guiding suggests this relationship is more complicated than to be conceived in such either/or terms; not least because other relationships feature in the player-guide combination such as friendships, partnerships and family as well as the social setting of a competitive sport. The next section, therefore, focuses on unequal relations of help, especially when help is underpinned by discourses of dependency and neediness.

5.3 Negotiating the role of the guide: power-struggles

So far I have demonstrated that guiding encompasses different kinds of people, different kinds of functions and different environments from guiding on the golf course and beyond. The player-guide relationship is a multifaceted and complex relationship that begs deeper analysis. Many issues arise such as how the players feel about asking someone to guide? How do the golfers feel about their interactions with guides? How are they treated by their guides, and how do they view the guides? Who is in control? Who takes the decisions? Who is the expert? It is to these questions I now turn in the following three subsections.

Perceptions of dependency

Guides are crucial for blind people's access to golf and this sets the relationship in an important context of social power relations. Although blind golf would be impossible without lots of other things/people/resources and so on, it is the role of the guide – perhaps because it is more discernible - that is often given most emphasis. In describing the role of the guide in section 5.2, Gus repeats that 'we couldnae golf without them'. In another interview, David and myself had not yet discussed the role of guides when he told me:

David we've really got to speak a little bit about the guides because really if we didn't have guides, there'd be no blind golf. You know, the guides are so, so important. ... they're, you know, the guides are absolutely, totally essential. As just without guides, there'd be no blind golf. (emphasis interviewees own)

Hence, without guides, there would be no blind golf. This is particularly relevant given the difficulty of recruiting guides discussed in chapter four. The guide is perceived as a necessity, which immediately places the golfer in a position where they consider themselves reliant upon sighted people to access golf. Many of the golfers do not just recognise the use of guides, but *emphasise* that they cannot play golf without a guide:

David As a guide you will understand this, but it's worth emphasising - you can't do it without a guide. (emphasis interviewees own)

Chris Well, the role of the guide is, we don't play if they're not there. End o' story. ... the guide is the be all and end all.

I will make two key points about this situation. Firstly, it places the guide in a more powerful position than the golfer as a help-giver rather than a help-receiver, especially since guides act as gatekeepers to the availability and accessibility of golf for blind people. Secondly, this feeling of being dependent upon a guide to play golf is significant because within this context it becomes difficult to criticise a guide or disagree with their opinions on the golf course and beyond.

This tension is made evident when some players are unhappy with the way they are being guided. This becomes a tricky situation for the blind golfers to negotiate and many find it hard to confront their guides; they may openly criticise their guide to others, but find it difficult to change the situation. Instead, the players often extend feelings of indebtedness and gratitude to guides. Robert, for example, discusses his thoughts on his various guides, highlighting some of the 'little things' that used to annoy him:

Robert *I've had too many guides since I started blind golf. But, my attitude to the game was, win or lose, I'm out there. I'm enjoying the time that I'm spending on the golf course. ... But the guides, they all differ. Russell, the lieutenant colonel, and the other diplomat, they had a bad habit of setting you up: Russell would grip - big strong arms - and he'd grip both ma hands and he'd get the club and [demonstrates that the guide would grip his hands over the players' and move the club that way] and this is what he used to do on the fairway. Now, these are the sort of things. The retired diplomat would come up and instead of saying, 'Move your left foot', he would take his foot and kick your feet into position. These little things that use to get to me.*

SM *Yeah*

Robert *But, of course, as Gary said, 'Tell them Robert'. 'No', I said eh, 'We are very fortunate in having those people.' I said, 'You just put a smile on your face and say thank you very much, you know, I appreciate you coming and giving your time to guide us'. I said, 'You can't go and tell them these things. You've gotta be careful what you say'. However, eh, on your backswing, they would line you up, they would stand there, 'Right Robert, you're ready now. Right now slow back, sloooow back, heeeead down, keep your heeeead doooown' [saying the words with extra slowness and mimicking the golf swing whilst say these words slowly as his guides did] and they would talk you through the back swing!*

SM *Right! [Laughs]*

Robert *Keep talkin' to you! And some of them still do it to this day! [SM laughs] I mean, it can be a wee bit distracting!*

Robert put up with various actions from his guides – physically moving him into the ‘correct’ position rather than asking, talking through his golf swing as if he was not capable of knowing how to swing a golf club – because he feels gratitude towards the sighted people who enable him to participate. For Robert, compliance and conflict are the only alternatives; the necessity for a guide, and the feeling of being fortunate to have people to guide, places him in an unequal position where he feels he cannot complain or change the inappropriate guide practices that annoy him.

Robert’s experience also links to the way in which blind people prefer sighted people to guide them around different environments, and not just a golf course. The golfers are sometimes physically controlled when being ‘guided’ around golf clubhouses, train stations and so on. Some guides will grab the players by their arms instead of guiding them and delivering their help if, when and how blind people prefer it to be provided. These social practices influence the way in which blind golfers move in and around space, and thus how they experience their personal geographies in golf or other settings when using a guide. Indeed, the social environment is significant to the disablist organisation of space within blind golf. In a similar vein, Butler and Bowlby (1997) discuss how their research participants encountered inappropriate forms of help from strangers in public space. For example, one interviewee recounted her story of finding herself disorientated by ‘unasked for help’ (Butler and Bowlby, 1997 p.425). Their respondents also explained that they experienced “shop assistants who try and ‘help’ by pulling your arms rather than letting you take theirs” (Butler and Bowlby, 1997 p.428). Butler and Bowlby (1997) argue that their interviewees found it difficult to change unequal relations of help partly due to expected reactions such as gratitude from disabled people, and partly due to their concern that they sometimes need help from sighted strangers.

French (1993b, p.44) argues that these feelings signify an unequal relationship between the help-giver and the help-receiver:

It is all too easy for the relationship between the helper and the person being helped to develop into an unequal one, with the helper having undue power

and the disabled person being compelled to express gratitude, or at best never to complain.

This situation in blind golf is, of course, exacerbated by the lack of people available to guide. Robert subsequently loses a sense of control over how he is being guided, at the same time as securing his freedom to play golf. He takes pleasure in his golf and so would rather have these guides, than no guide at all; perhaps this is why Robert feels that he has to be 'careful' about what he says. This contradictory context is thus shaped by unequal power-relations between the helper (guide) and the person receiving help (blind golfer).

As well as expressing gratitude and not feeling in a position to complain, the players also have a sense of guilt. For example, some players talk about the notion of 'guide-time'; that is the time that guides either take off paid-work or use out of their 'free-time' to guide. In a telephone conversation to arrange an interview, one golfer told me that with the growing number of blind golf events locally, nationally and internationally, '*guide time is huge*' and some guides were taking annual holiday entitlement to guide at certain events. In the interview itself, David further elaborated that this is a '*huge commitment for people*' and how he is '*very aware of the commitment we are getting and we don't want to, you know, have them over-commit*'.

Feelings of guilt and gratitude for needing people to guide illustrates the difficulty of accepting help in the context of British society in the early 21st Century that values the notion of independence in terms of self-sufficiency under the ideology of individualism (Swain, French and Cameron, 2003; French, 1993b; see also Tronto, 1994). This powerful ideology impacts on the way in which blind golfers feel about the help they receive in the face of this pressure to be 'independent'. This feeling of guilt for needing and using a guide could have a negative impact on the golfers' emotional well-being (Reeve, 2002; Thomas, 1999). The players have to juggle the contradiction between recognising the materiality of their visual impairment in golf and their right to receive assistance to enable them to access the sport on the one hand, and on the other, the difficulty therefore of being dependent on help in a

society that values individualism, autonomy and independence (see also Butler and Bowlby, 1997). I will return to notions of independence, dependence and also inter-dependence in the final section of this chapter, especially to discuss the ways in which feminist and disability perspectives call into question this particular notion of independence as self-governance.

This first subsection has demonstrated that feelings of dependency, gratitude, luck, and guilt powerfully shape relations between player and guide. I have argued that this signifies an unequal helping relationship. So what happens in this climate of gratitude, of feeling fortunate for, and dependent upon, sighted people to act as guides? Combined with dominant discourses surrounding help outlined in section 5.2, what kind of relationship does this social context enable? Being dependent upon a sighted person to guide may also mean that the players find it hard to assert any power in the player-guide relationship. Robert's experience, as discussed above, also demonstrates the way in which his guides were physically controlling him. I now further explore the ways in which guides can control the player-guide relationship.

Who's in control?

The guides are already placed in a more privileged and powerful position of authority in the 'dependency' context of the player-guide relationship. Many guides therefore adopt the stance of an 'expert' in this relationship and take control of the decisions on the golf course. One way in which guides enact this position is to tell the golfers how to play their golf shot, from the perspective of how the guide would choose to play it for themselves:

Calum *Now, I think the problem with some players and guides is that if you have a guide who wants you as a visually impaired person to play the shot the way they would play the shot, then that can be problematic. And that's the problem I have with my guide, cos he keeps wantin' me to play the shot the way he would play the shot. Em, and it's possible that because of the description of what I'm getting that I feel confident about playing it a different way. Not because I can see what's happenin', not because I know better, but because I know what shots I'm confident playin'.*

Calum has to negotiate with his guide in order to play the shot that he would prefer to play. The blind person in this instance is being told what to do by a sighted person who believes they know better. Some guides, therefore, assume superiority over the

person they are guiding for.

The same golfer exemplified his experience on the golf course with another guide who also attempted to control the decisions and thus dominate the player-guide relationship:

Calum *So when [name of previous guide] was guidin' for me, he would always want me to play the shot his way and of course I had to do that. But if I made a mistake, you know if the shot didnae go the way - I have a problem wi' and I still do wi' ma shortgame - he used to take his bunnet off and batter me wi' his bunnet. [SM gasps in disbelief] I used to walk round the golf course and he's batterin' me o'er the heid wi' this bunnet. I had that a' the time.*

SM *What wis that all about?*

Calum *It was about, [name of previous guide] bein' frustrated about no' playin' the shot for me and having forced me to play the shot his way. Because I used to say to him, if I had something like 70 yards, he would be sayin', 'Aye jist a wee three quarter pitch'. But because I knew fine my wedge shots were not, are not, probably will not be the best, I used to say, 'Well, what if I just play a wee pitch and run wi' a four iron or something like that?', you know. 'Nay, nut'. Wisnae allowed to dae that. The wind might be gustin' at 90 mile an hour or something like that, but [name of previous guide] would want me tae hit a wedge shot.*

Calum is being controlled both physically – being hit over the head by his guide's hat – and also by being forced into hitting particular golf shots by his guide's way of thinking. This demonstrates the way in which some blind golfers are treated by their guides who presume authority and expert knowledge in the relationship. This is precisely the way in which the superior status of helpers undermines their capacity to provide responsive help (see also Shakespeare, 2000).

The above example also highlights the infantilisation of disabled people (see also chapter four). The player is being controlled by their guide as if they are a child who can be 'told-off' for not doing as they are told. Disability commentators have convincingly demonstrated the way in which disabled people are treated as child-like (for example, Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Morris, 1996) and in particular that recipients of help are often regarded as children (Shakespeare, 2000, p.15; see also Tronto, 1994 p.170). Such disabling social barriers can leave disabled people feeling incapable, worthless and of lesser value (Morris, 1991; Thomas, 1999). The blind

golfers often experience this kind of dynamic between them and their guide, which can leave them feeling very frustrated. For instance, at one blind golf event I noted this tension in the player-guide relationship:

Craig told me that he had been really annoyed with his guide because he sometimes was making comments on how Craig had played the shot, or if he hit a bad shot he'd say things like 'what did you do that for?' and Craig said to me, 'as if I meant to hit a bad shot!' ... Craig said that the problem is that some of the guides, who incidentally are not good golfers, think that they are better than the blind golfers and so can give them advice about the golf shot to be played, or on swing technique etc. Craig, however, said that a lot of the blind golfers are far better players than some of the guides (Field Notes 08).

The knowledge and capability of the golfer is treated as inferior in the relationship, which links to the power-relations between disabled and non-disabled people. As Tronto (1994, p.120) explains:

Because neediness is conceived as a threat to autonomy, those who have more needs than us appear to be less autonomous, and hence less powerful and less capable. ... Those in the disabled rights movement have long acknowledged how difficult it is to get so-called able-bodied citizens to recognise and respect them as people who are equally deserving of dignity and respect.

Guides are placed in a more privileged and powerful position not just as help-givers, but also as sighted people. Both low expectations of the golfers' ability to make and take the right decisions for themselves and the stereotypical notion that blind people cannot be as good at golf as sighted people permeate the player-guide relationship. This links back to the assumptions of what makes a 'good golfer' discussed in chapter two, as well as the assumptions surrounding blind golfers outlined in chapter four. For example, Robert told me that one of his guides held the attitude that:

Robert *"He's blind". 'Right. So take a half-swing and keep knocking the ball up the fairway 60 or 80 yards, and five of those shots your on the green, and two putts you've got a seven!' I said, '[sighing] Oh, that's not my golf game' [with a frustrated tone of voice].*

The prevailing social dynamic between sighted and blind people is therefore prominent in relations between player and guide and the way in which help is given and experienced. Of course, it may be that some guides are better golfers, have a

greater knowledge of the game and played for much longer and so on. An expert/novice relationship may develop, but the above examples suggest that disablist power-relations are being expressed here.

Another explanation for the guide treating their knowledge as superior may be linked to the conflation of seeing and knowing, and the role of 'objective vision' in claims to 'expert' knowledge (Haraway, 1991; Michalko, 2002; Rose, 1993; 2001; see also chapter two). Due to this privileging of the visual in the production of knowledge, the knowledge produced by the guides is treated as superior to the players because they 'can see the shot':

Chris But the guide really has the say. Cos if it's windy or the wind's goin' a certain way, or they see the ground's hard or bumpy and they know - they see the run on the ball. We don't.

In this context, it is hard to contest 'the visual' as a powerful route to 'truth' and 'knowledge'. As Michalko (2002, p.178) has argued, 'real' knowledge about the world is produced from the seeing/sighted subject and knowledge gleaned from the location of blindness is considered 'defective'. In a similar vein to Michalko's analysis, I propose that the politics of vision and visibility influence interactions between player and guide.

The context of the player-guide relationship, however, begs further analysis about control over decisions on the golf course and whose knowledge counts. For instance, Calum raised the issue that guides do provide an 'expert' role to some extent:

Calum we've got members who depending on the guide that they have will either play absolutely incredible golf, totally beyond belief and yet if they went out the next day wi' a changed guide, they couldnae hit a barn door at twenty paces ... I think it's also to do wi' the fact that if you have a regular guide who knows your set-up - because as a visually impaired person you cannae always see your set-up or be aware of it and you only need to be a fraction out and your shot's rubbish. And I think that's why Kevin is so good wi' his guide ... and the reason for that is that his guide has him set absolutely spot on for every shot.

Guides have to build up practical knowledge to describe the topography of the golf course non-visually and technical knowledge of the golf swing, including how to correctly align a player to their chosen target and the golf 'set-up'. Evidently, not all

guides have these skills and so many players believe that guides could benefit from golf coaching to improve their technical knowledge and thus improve the quality of their help:

Both Gary and Chris told me that coaching for guides would be a good idea because some of the guides should be taught how to line them up properly and also get given tips on the golf swing (Field Notes 04).

The SBGS provide coaching for players, but not for guides. Robert explained to me that a golf professional had suggested:

Robert *So we were talking away and eh, I was hitting shots and I said to him, 'You know, I wish the guides would do that' ... He said, 'Robert why don't we arrange for me to come down to an SBGS event and get the guides and me give the guides [a lesson]'. He said, 'I don't think it's just the blind golfers that need the tuition. It's the guides that need training on how to set the blind golfers up'.*

The knowledge the guide has, or could bring to, the player-guide relationship is important to the player, but this should not equate to the creation of an unequal relationship that mobilises power-relations across sightedness and blindness. The abilities and skills of both player and guide need to be utilised and respected in this relationship.

Of course, the golfers are not only blind and the guides are not only sighted. The player-guide relationship is multifaceted and so a mesh of power relations may be relevant, across age, status, class, gender and so on. Linking back to the experience of Robert, who was physically moved into position to hit the golf shot by two guides, one was formerly a lieutenant colonel and the other a retired diplomat. As an ordinary working-class man, Robert may have also found it difficult to change inappropriate guiding practices given the social status of these two middle-class men retired from such eminent positions. It is, however, husband/wife player-guide partnerships that are often commented upon. As outlined in section 5.2, guides are often family members, partners or spouses, which fracture this dynamic between sighted and blind in the social relations of help in blind golf. In the bar after one tournament, for example, I note that:

Two of the blind golfers then had a chat about Jamie and Fiona and how their player-guide relationship is strained because of the fact they are husband and wife also ... The story of the day about Jamie and Fiona I was hearing time again, was how the frustration between them was publicly demonstrated on the golf course.

Keith said to me that if I ever became a blind golfer 'don't let Chris guide you!' as if to insinuate that very few player-guide husband/wife relationships work (Field Notes 08).

Another time I noted how one guide, Gail, who was married to the player she was guiding for, Paul, was continually 'over-ruled' by her husband in disagreements they had over decisions on the course (Field Notes 09). Gail and Paul chatted with me in the clubhouse afterwards about player-guide relationships that were also married relationships. Empathising with another husband and wife player-guide combination, Gail commented that *'Lesley takes a lot of abuse from David. She says it's very hard when there's more to your relationship like husband and wife relations'* (Field Notes 06). This dynamic may mean that for some players they remain in a more powerful position if they mobilise patriarchal relations of power between husband and wife.

Likewise there are other player-guide relationships pervaded by family connections. On explaining to one participant in our pre-interview telephone conversation that player-guide relations were a potential topic for discussion, Robert recalled that one SBGS member's son who guided used to *'get furious with his Dad'*. On the other hand, Phil told me he chose not to guide for his father any more *'because his Dad never listens to his advice and it's too frustrating'* (Field Notes 06). Another golfer, Mike, explained to me that he seldom asks his son to guide because they constantly argue on the golfer as father and 'teenage' son, disagreeing over most decisions. For example:

Mike described a time when his son, who was guiding for him, said, 'No, you're no' hittin' that'. Mike explained to me that the club he didn't want him to hit was his driver off the fairway, which is always a difficult and risky golf shot regardless of whether you're a scratch player or 20 handicap, but Mike wanted to hit that club to for extra distance. But his son was adamant, 'Yer not hittin' that! You're not hittin' that'. He sais, 'I'm not followin' it then'. Mike said he turned round to face the opposite direction from the flag and said, 'No. You hit yer 3 wood straighter than anything, jist hit that'. Mike said he wis probably right but that he had to go with what his guide said that time cos he put me him in a bit of a dilemma! [Both laugh] (Field Notes 08).

Addressing issues of control, autonomy and choice in this particular helping relationship, therefore, cannot simply be answered on the basis of unequal relations between sighted and blind people. The relationship is fractured with other dynamics,

such as father/son relations, which demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the player-guide relationship.

Regardless of the complicated nature of helping relationships, what is clear from the first two sub-sections is that the social relations of help need to be more equally experienced. By and large, the blind golfers are still being treated, and arguably still being perceived, as unequal and inferior. One particular player-guide relationship discussed above - where the guide dominated the relationship and hit the golfer over the head with a hat when frustrated - however unequal and unfair 'worked', as the player told me that he won many events with this guide. This prompted me to ask:

SM *What way do you prefer?*

Calum *I enjoy ma game. So I want to play my game. I don't want to play somebody-else's game. If it means I'm no' gonnae win, so be it.*

The player explicitly prefers to be the one making and taking the decisions on the golf course, presumably in co-operation with their guide, as opposed to being told what to do. Although I have argued that the guide is placed in a more powerful position and often controls the player-guide relationship, this does not mean that players passively assume an inferior position in the relationship. Being in a position of dependency and acknowledging the requirement of a sighted person to act as a guide for playing a round of golf, does not necessarily mean that all players consider themselves as dependent. The players want whatever ability and expertise they have to be acknowledged too, and thus the right to exercise choice and control in how they play their golf. In the final subsection, I therefore demonstrate how the golfers challenge for control within the relationship.

Challenging for control

There are various examples where players ask their guides to change the way they are doing something, glean the information for themselves on slopes and distances on the golf course such as through pacing the distance rather than relying upon the yardage given by their guides or openly question the 'accuracy' of the information provided by their guides. Such examples form the basis of this

subsection on ways where the golfers negotiate the power-relations analysed above. The following player for instance openly criticises his guide as he was unhappy with the way he had been lined up:

Alistair hit his first tee shot into the big trees on the right, and his second attempt followed in the same direction. Alistair gave his brother a kind of row, blaming him for where the tee shot ended up by saying that he hadn't positioned his white stick near enough to the ball. Alistair likes to have his white stick placed along the ground in the right direction for him, so he can line himself up using the white stick and then it is taken away just before he hits his shot. Alistair complained to his brother that he had placed the stick too close to his feet, and therefore he wasn't able to set himself up very well (Field Notes 07).

This particular player may find it easier to openly disagree with his guide because they are brothers, yet it is still illustrative of a player challenging their guide's actions.

Negotiating control in the player-guide relationship is often done in the decision-making processes on the golf course. Blind golfers, for instance, may find out relevant information on the golf course on their own terms. This is done through two main ways: firstly, by pacing the distance between the ball and the target and secondly, by feeling for undulations on the putting surface. As Nick explains:

Nick Certainly pacin' out can be quite helpful because it can give you an idea 1) of distance, if your guide maybe is not so accurate as you would like to be. Em, but it also gives you the feel of an undulation. For example, if it's a plateaued green. You know, you'll be able to feel either goin' up or down to the next level. Em and say, 'Oh well, this is maybe a 12 yard putt but I'll actually hit this for only 7 cos the hill will take it down' and pacin' that out can give you a better idea. You know, no matter how descriptive the guide is or how accurate, it's always nice just to do that to settle your mind.

Nick does not necessarily assume the guide knows best or is in a superior position to provide accurate information. In receiving information that may, or may not, corroborate with their guide, players are better placed to introduce an element of choice and autonomy into the helping relationship. This could also work the other way around however, as if the player has a more positive sense of choice or autonomy, then they may challenge their guide.

Similarly, Stevie prefers to make and take decisions based upon knowledge of his own game, especially if a stranger is guiding for him who is not good at visualising distances or has no prior knowledge of how far he hits the golf ball:

Stevie I've mibbie gone to one or two Classics where I've had a stranger guiding me, you know, an' they'll say the distance and I know from that, 60 yards that's about two thirds, about three quarter swing, just under three quarter swing for me, a pitching wedge. So I play to that and then I'll mibbie be either over the back of the green or short, you know. But that's eh, you can't really blame the guide either, it may not have been - sometimes they're not very good at distances. So sometimes they'll tell you a club to use, because that's the club they would use and we all hit the ball different distances for the same club. Eh, that happened at The Scottish Strokeplay. Eh, the guy that was guiding me, ... and eh, I think it was about the 8th hole I put it over the fence at the back out of bounds. He says, 'Well that would've been a 5, sorry'. He says, 'That would've been a 5 iron for me' and of course it should've been about a 7 for me. ... That's why I always want to know the distance rather than what club to use, unless it's [my regular guide] and he knows pretty well how far I hit each shot with each club. But with a stranger then eh, it needs to be distances, that's different.

Stevie questions the 'accuracy' and authority of some guides, but in so doing assumes that the golf shot will always be hit cleanly and to perfection by himself. Stevie also added in our interview that blind golfers become 'experts' in interpreting the information that guides provide in order to suit their game. As Duncan articulates:

Duncan Em, it's like when I go out with two guys that I play medals with, if one of them says, 'You're ball's 20 yards away, slightly to the right', I know when I walk 15 yards to start looking for it, when I've walked 15 paces to start looking for it because I pace a yard. If the other guy says it's 20 yards away, I know after 10 paces to start looking for my ball cos he's 5 foot 2 like you [laughter] and his yardage is totally different and he underestimates distance. So you know when one guide says about 150 yards, it's actually about 130, but you learn. If you're going out with the same person, after a while you learn to compensate for what they're saying, you know.

The golfers, therefore, also build up 'expert' knowledge and skills to help themselves take control over their decisions on the golf course.

Another way the golfers exert control is to decide who guides for them. If unhappy with the way in which they are being guided, some golfers will not use the same guide again. For example, Gus tells of one experience where he had a poor guide that he chose not to use again:

Gus *there wis a reporter from wannae the papers who wis walkin' beside ma guide, an' ma guide wid jist say tae me, 'Just walk on doon, I'll tell ye where yer ba' is. There's a club. So he'd gie me a coupley clubs and I'd walk away doon. And I hud tae say tae the other fella who wis guidin' for the other blind fella, 'Can ye line me up?' 'Aye, nae bother'. ... So I thought, we cannae go on like this. Aboot the 14th or somethin' like that, ma guide lined me up, but he aimed me aboot 70 yards to the right of where the actual green wis! And the reporter asked came up tae me an sais', 'Gus', she sais, 'Don't mind me askin', but whit the hell are ye doin' away ower there?' I said, 'Where?' She said, 'Away at least, 70 yards right of the green'. I said, 'But that's where ma guide sent me'. 'Actually, I've been watchin' him', she sais, 'I tell ye whit, I'll line ye up'. So she lines me up for the next 6 holes, see the difference? It wis marvellous. ... He wis suppose tae guide fur me [at another SBGS event] but I thought, 'I cannae face another roond wi' [name of person who guided before]. He husnae a clue whit he's daen'. (emphasis interviewees own)*

Given the scarcity of guides, however, this is not a common reaction and it is more likely that there may be no one available to guide as opposed to the golfer being a position where they choose to 'sack' their guide and give up their opportunity to participate in an SBGS event.

There is a danger in this analysis of presenting guides as 'the baddies' and golfers as 'the goodies'. In the above subsection, I highlighted that family relationships can complicate the social relations of help between a sighted person who is acting as a guide and a golfer who is blind – fathers can argue with their sons, and husbands may be in a more powerful position than their wives. It is important to note, therefore, that although golfers may be mistreated by their guides, guides may also be mistreated by the golfer. While Gus 'sacked' his guide, guides may decide not to guide a particular player because of *their* behaviour. For example, Robert told me why one blind golfer could not get people to guide:

Robert *But some of them, the golfers, they started to expect them [i.e. guides] to carry their clubs and they were people that were retired! And young Cameron used to say, 'Right'. Oh he got someone [to carry his clubs] and there he was, young Faldo steps off the first tee [SM laughing], walks away up the fairway and the poor man's walking carrying his clubs! So someone told me, I sais 'Cameron!' Stupid that! But he wouldn't listen, so Cameron lost guide after guide after guide.*

Questioning the role of the guide and negotiating for control in the relationship, however, is not easy because it can create conflict between player and guide. For example, at one tournament I observed:

Nigel was feeling for the hole from 4 feet, when his guide seemed to get upset about this, (jokingly?) expressing that “don’t you trust me!” (Field Notes 09)

Nick contends that the final decision on the golf course should rest with the golfer, not the guide, and further illustrates that there can be banter within the player-guide relationship surrounding ‘blaming the guide’.

Nick I suppose the final decision comes down to the blind golfer. Eh, but if the guide says somethin’ and then you mess it up, then it’s your fault. [SM laughs] Mind you, it’s sometimes you take the guide along for somebody else to blame! [Nick and SM laugh] Because the guide’s are never right when you’ve sunk a 20 yard putt, you know, ‘It was a good line’ but that was about it. [SM laughs] But if it was a bad shot, it’s always the guide’s fault. [SM laughs]

I observed this banter between players and guides, both on the golf course and off the golf course, at SBGS events:

In the clubhouse, jokes go round the table such as ‘oh just blame yer guide’, or ‘so the guide’s been sacked!’. Nick told me that, ‘you’re only a good guide until you’ve been sacked at least six times!’ There’s always plenty banter between players and guides (Field Notes 06).

This banter is perhaps a means whereby the golfers can get angry with certain guiding practices, and thus a means to contain conflict and power-struggles in a non-threatening way. It may also be a strategy to manage the emotional costs of disabling social relations, such as feelings of guilt and frustration, as discussed above (Reeve, 2003; see also chapter seven).

Some players thus contend that the guide should not be telling the golfer what to do and that the knowledge of the golfer should be listened to and respected, and ‘final decisions’ should rest with the player. Colin, for example, told me: *‘not that the guide should be tellin’ ye how to play each shot, ... but the golfer has to be the instigator in tellin’ them what to do’*. In this way, players want to control the way in which their help is delivered because they are aware of what they need and how. As Tronto (1994, p. 109) writes

Care-receivers might have different ideas about their needs than do the care-givers. Care-receivers may want to direct, rather than simply be the passive recipients of the care-giving that they receive.

The above examples demonstrate that the golfers are not passive in this helping relationship. Colin’s view of the player-guide relationship link closely to arguments

made within disability literatures, which contend that disabled people are capable of acting 'independently' in helper-helped relationships. In discussing disabled people's relationships with professionals, Oliver (1993, p.54) states:

Professionals tend to define independence in terms of self-care activities such as washing, dressing, toileting, cooking and eating without assistance. Disabled people, however, define independence differently, seeing it as the ability to be in control of and make decisions about one's life, rather than doing things alone or without help.

'Independence' is *redefined* as having control over certain tasks, decisions and so on rather than as self-reliance (see also French, 1993b). This notion of exerting choice, control and autonomy in the way help is provided underpins, for example, literatures on Independent Living (Morris, 1991; Reindal, 1999 p.356). From this perspective, the people receiving help – the blind golfers – need to be listened to and respected, and in control of their help, so that more helpful and responsive help can be provided.

Colin's perspective also links to feminist theorists who argue that the focus should be on needs rather than the 'caring' relationship (for example, Fraser, 1989). Colin explains his position in more detail:

Colin if you don't tell the guide what you want them to do, if you don't explain that what you actually need - some people need all different, everybody's different, their eyesight's all different and the perception stuff, some people have got tunnel vision, where they can see great distances, but they've got no peripheral vision. So, I don't know what they would actually need. Maybe very little, but as soon as they hit the ball, they've probably lost it, you know, but then they could actually look an' see where the pin is and see where the green is, but you know, 'Don't turn round quick or you'll bash into me' kind of thing because they cannae see you. I think, I think every guide is has to get used to what each golfer needs.

From this perspective, it is the player, not the guide, who should lead the player-guide relationship. Golfers have to share how they prefer to be guided for the helper/helped relationship to work best. Rather than leaving unhelpful and controlling guiding practices left unquestioned, some golfers take an active role in controlling the kinds of help they require based on telling players what they *need* and exert autonomy and independence in this way. But whose needs count? Player, guide or both? Nancy Fraser (1989; see also Tronto, 1994) argues that "needs interpretation" must necessarily involve both help-givers and help-receivers. This

signals the limitations of emphasising one side of the relationship over the other, which I discuss further in the following section.

The above discussion demonstrates that many guides, although placed in a difficult position to do so, question and challenge the superior position of a player. They resist and challenge the disablist forces shaping the player-guide relationship. This can be directly asking the guide to change something, glean information for themselves on the course through pace and feel, and learning to interpret the information from their guides. In so doing, I developed the argument that the golfers are better placed than their guide to make decisions over the way in which help is delivered because they are aware of what they need and how; thus players should control the way in which their help is delivered. Some disability commentators argue that offering an alternative and problematised view of 'independence' is insufficient, especially since it relies upon an either/or situation between independence and dependence, where independence is treated as the significant goal, and also that it continues to individualise independence (French, 1993b; Shakespeare, 2000; Swain, French and Cameron, 2003). For example, Shakespeare (2000, p.77) writes:

Perhaps it would be more effective to challenge the overall liberal tradition and individualism, rather than claim access to the notion for a particular excluded population.

In the following section I consider an alternative helper-helped relationship that moves towards a notion of inter-dependence and relational autonomy.

5.4 Moving towards interdependency: the 'team' concept

Initially, my field notes contained references to the player-guide relationship which assumed that the guides, as helpers and sighted people, would exercise control and authority in ways that oppressed and marginalised blind golfers. My taken-for-granted perspective was that guides dominated all player-guide relationships and guides would have to work at changing their controlling behaviour towards blind golfers/those being helped. In my early writings I often dismiss the guide's

interventions in blind golf, writing things like, '*because as far as I'm concerned it's the golfer who counts not the guide*' (Field Notes 05). In my observations of conflicts between player and guide, I would 'blame' guides as 'oppressors'. Yet my initial thoughts changed over time. In the same month – albeit later in the month – of taking field notes, I also write: '*I walked the first few holes with Nick. I was listening and observing to the way in which him and his guide 'worked together'*' (Field Notes 05). I slowly began to re-interpret my initial assumptions that 'all guides were oppressors' (see also chapter seven) and learn about alternative possibilities from the golfers, which encompassed interdependent player-guide relationships that were described as a 'team'. This process of is encapsulated in the following excerpt:

I spoke with Keith about how he wanted to be guided, 'Keith, you just tell me how you want to be guided, and I won't be offended if you tell me not to do something etc'. Keith explained that he needed help with distance and clubbing, and alignment. ... When Keith drove off the first tee and we were walking down the first fairway he said to me, 'note how I'll start to use 'we' today'. This is something that I'm starting to change my mind about, i.e. the player-guide relationship. Because sometimes people ask how others have got on, and they might direct the question at the guide as in 'how did you score today?' with the 'you' being 'you' plural. I've previously hated this because I believed that it's the player who matters and not the guide, but actually the players don't view the relationship in this way. They consider the relationship to be more of a team effort. I also think I was opposed to answering such questions when somebody would ask me, 'how did you score today?' and I would turn to the player I'd been guiding for and say, 'what did you score again?' as in you singular, because I was conscious of being the 'non-disabled' person was being asked to speak on behalf of the 'disabled' person. But I'm starting to review that, because I think I've been thinking about the relationship all wrong - especially since the player-guide relationship is recognised as a team effort (Field Notes 06).

This leads me to suggest that alternative approaches to help can be realised that are based upon mutuality and interdependency, moving beyond the constraints of independence versus dependence or a position which simply claims a redefined notion of 'independence'.

The constraints of 'independence versus dependence' are recognised by disability authors:

It is not that disabled people want to be seen as independent but that the whole ideology of 'independence versus dependence' needs to be recognised as disabling and dismantled (Swain, French and Cameron, 2003 p.81).

Similarly, Oliver states (1993, p.50), “no one in modern industrial society is completely independent for we live in a state of mutual interdependence”. The idea of interdependency recognises that we all need assistance to some degree and rely on help from others. For instance, blind golfers (and guides) are help-givers as well as help-receivers, especially in terms of their multiple positions as partners, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, friends and so on. Keith and Morris (1996) also argue that disabled people are not simply dependent upon other people for help, but provide help for others too. Indeed, the game of golf is based upon elements on interdependence because all golfers rely upon help from other golfers to a certain degree. Colin explains:

Colin I mean, what's funny is, when you look at it, normally if you're sighted, fully sighted and you're playin' in a three-ball, the other two generally look out for your ball as well. ... The thing is that em, it's then, it's when you're registered, you actually feel an embarrassment of actually askin' somebody to look for the ball for you. Now, it's something that happens naturally when you're sighted and you take it for granted because you don't even think about it and then - when you're sighted, you may well see it to a certain extent, but weather conditions can vary when you don't see it or the ball is gone and you just haven't got an idea.

This example is analysed further in chapter six, but here it is used to illustrate that all golfers need help in different ways and to different degrees, even though the prevailing discourse of ‘independence versus dependence’ and hegemonic constructions of blind people/blind golfers means that Colin’s needs are treated as qualitatively different (see also French, 1993b; Oliver, 1993). This is precisely why these powerful ideologies need to be dismantled; sighted golfers use the help of others to look for their golf ball, but when blind golfers use others to watch for their golf ball, it becomes interpreted as something different.

Feminist philosophies can be usefully drawn in to disability debates as a means to deconstruct such binary distinctions between independence/dependence, especially feminist writings such as Tronto (1994) and Sevenhuijsen (1998) who have promoted the notion of interdependence and relational autonomy:

We will need to rethink our conceptions of human nature to shift from the dilemma of autonomy or dependency to a more sophisticated sense of human interdependence (Tronto, 1994 p.101).

Central to such feminist accounts is a critique of the notion that selves are either autonomous from, or forged through relationships with, others. In place of this opposition, selves are theorised as incorporating capacities for both independence and dependence:

Since people are sometimes autonomous, sometimes dependent, sometimes providing care for those who are dependent, humans are best described as interdependent. Thinking of people as interdependent allows us to understand both autonomous and involved elements of human life (Tronto, 1994 p.162).

This promotes a revisioning of the idea of human existence to include dependence and relational autonomy as an integral part, as Sevenhuijsen (1998, p.28) argues:

The ideal of abstract autonomy overlooks what it is that makes care an element of the human condition, i.e. the recognition that all people are vulnerable, dependent and infinite, and that we all have to find ways of dealing with this in our daily existence and in the values which guide our individual and collective behaviour.

The concept of a team partnership is an important one in blind golf. Many of the golfers consider the player-guide relationship as a 'team' and thus value the notion of 'interdependence' because their lived experiences incorporate capacities for both acting 'independently' and through relations with others.

The 'team concept' is demonstrated by the way in which some player-guide relationships approach certain aspects of guiding such as decision-making processes during shot selection, club selection and so on.

Chris I'll pace from mibbie 50 yards to see where the green starts and come back. Say I'm only walkin' 30 yards or somethin' and I walk back and I'll say, 'Right, now I know how hard I've tae hit this to get tae the green'. And [name of guide] will say, 'Right, let me see you're swing'. Shhoo [Chris does sound effects and golf swing action]. 'No, a wee bit less than that'. And he knows how hard I even hit the ball jist wi' the swing, you know. He wid say, 'Right, hit it at that'. And that's how me and [name of guide] have been so successful.

Chris and his guide work well together. I observed other team dynamics between different player-guide relationships on the golf course:

Gary sank a good putt and responded saying to his guide, 'oh great read, great read'. His guide said, 'well done, great putt'. ... Gary and his guide connected well like a team as they did 'high-fives' after good shots or putts. I think it is really important that guide and player work well together and it certainly was reflected in

their score as they had a nett 67.5 which was leading when I left the golf club (Field Notes 05).

The way in which Gary and his guide interacted exemplifies that this kind of 'team' partnership operates with mutual respect and recognition that both player and guide bring certain abilities and skills to the relationship. Although player-guide relationships are interdependent, this also demonstrates a level of reciprocity between the help-giver and the help-receiver.

The 'team' approach is mainly developed amongst players and guides who 'work' together regularly:

David My guide knows the information I need, the type of information I want or don't want and that's sort of a partnership. ... It's a team event. It is a team: your guide and you. The guide is just as important as the player. ... what I find work best is that you're better with, most of the time, having the same person guiding for you cos you've set up that relationship.

David and his guide have been able to learn from each other what works best in their relationship, and they can work more effectively together as a result. The relationship between Gus (blind golfer) and Pat (guide) further illustrates this:

Gus if Pat says tae me, 'You've a hundred and fifty yards tae go'. Oh right, fair enough, I take ma 6 iron. Or if it's hard [if the ground is hard], 7 iron bounce it on and let it run on, more like that. And if Pat sais, 'No, you're better wi' an 8 iron. It's awfie hard'.

Pat A lot depends on the lie, obviously, whether it's rough or whether it's smooth - if you can run the ball fair enough, it's got extra run on it an' a' the restae it.

Gus And mibbie a wind comin' behind ye, or a wind in yer face. So ye know right away if it's comin' behind ye, if it's a strong wind, yer gonnae drap a club or two. ...

Pat The biggest benefit I think of the lot between the guide and the golfer, is if who can get the same guide continuously. Like, for argument's sake, me and Gus.

Gus Aye, we're lucky that way.

Pat Cos I know what he clubs, and the majority of the time he sais, 'Right, I'll walk up and look at that, get the feel of the ground'. When he comes back, 9 times out tae 10 I've already got the club out because I know what he's gonnae play. ... But it's a big benefit if the two of youse are there a' the time an' ye know what each other's doin' kind of thing.

Neither Gus nor Pat are completely autonomous or dependent subjects, they are two people working together as a team, respecting the information and experience they both bring to the relationship and take decisions together as a result. The social

relations of help in such circumstances are more equal, reciprocal, mutual and interdependent.

Not all the players have the same people to guide them all the time, yet those who do can work and develop their relationship as a team partnership. Some golfers try to instil the notion of the 'team concept' into all their player-guide experiences, however, especially through decision-making processes on the golf course:

Nick It's more difficult if it's a brand new guide. You know, somebody fillin' in at the last minute who doesn't know your game particularly well, you've got to tell the guide what you do, you know say, 'Well with me driver it's always a fade back in, hopefully, by the middle of the fairway. So aim us up the left'. If it's a competent, em familiar guide they'll know your game and say, 'Well, I wouldn't take the driver here. Drop down to your 3 wood because if you catch this, there's a bunker to the left at 220 yards. If you catch it really well, you're straight in there'. ... We'll discuss things like, 'We'll play the percentage shot here cos I'm not playin' particularly well today', for example, 'and we'll play the percentage. I'm gonna aim you to the right of the green, em because there's a big bunker there. We're not going to end up like the last one!'. [SM laughs] Things like that. ... Eh as I said before, if I'm thinkin' a 5 iron they'll mibbie say, 'Naw, drop back to a 7 eh because the wind's behind you'. And things like that. So, it's a team event.

Similar to Pat and Gus, Nick prefers the player-guide relationship to operate as a partnership, where both player and guide make and take decisions, weighing up the pros and cons of particular club selections, shot selections and so on together.

The context of the game of golf is important to the player-guide relationship because there can be team events when both player and guide are playing together. What I deliberately failed to mention in the example in the second section - where Chris and his son argued about club selection and Chris' son turned his back, refusing to watch for the golf ball - was that they were *playing together* in a player-guide event. This context is crucial for it puts a slightly different spin on the first interpretation of Chris' story. They were a competitive team and Chris' son was perhaps anxious for his Dad to choose a safer option of the 3-wood rather than the driver because they would both lose out if the golf ball was hit badly. As the above examples demonstrate, however, this concept of a 'team event' with player and guide operating as a team partnership is significant regardless of what kind of blind golf event it is:

Nick *Even if it's just – a player-guide match obviously you're both playin' greensomes or a fourball, twoball or whatever, but even when it's just the blind golfer playin', you know, it's still a team event.*

This is particularly relevant where guides are motivated by international competition, as section 5.2 highlighted. Some guides are just as keen as some players to achieve a high position on the Order of Merit and qualify for International matches because they enjoy competing at an international level.

A discourse of disability rights and equality is an important step in delivering help that empowers rather than disables (Shakespeare, 2000 p.63). In addition, disability debates could usefully consider feminist notions of interdependency and relational autonomy, which treat both independence and dependence as integral to the human condition:

We might then recognise that we are all dependent on each other, and that disabled people's limitations are not qualitatively different from those of other human beings (Shakespeare, 2000 p.77).

In this respect, I think those player-guide relationships that are functioning as partnerships between helpers and those they help should be held as the goal rather than a revisioning of 'independence'. In the words of Keith, *'that's what people don't realise, it's a team, it really is (Field Notes, 07).*

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interpersonal relationships between blind golfers and their guides. I demonstrated that this is a complex and contradictory relationship, fraught with many tensions and fractured with various axes of power. Firstly, I examined paternalistic and patronising approaches to helping and suggested that guides – myself included – adopt multiple and contradictory attitudes to their role. There are different motivations for guiding in blind golf, which are not all constructed through discourses of dependency and pity. Secondly, I explored unequal power relations evident in the player-guide relationship. I argued that the blind golfers are still being treated, and arguably still being perceived, as subordinate and inferior. Indeed, as Shakespeare (2000) argues, respect and mutuality needs to

replace sympathy and superiority in helper-helped relationships. The blind golfers were not passive recipients of help, and although placed in a difficult position to do so, they did question and challenge the 'superior' position of the guide. This suggested that the golfers should control and direct the help they receive. In the final section, I offered an alternative approach to helping relationships based upon examples of player-guide relationships that enable a more equal process of making and taking decisions. This is the concept of a 'team' partnership between player and guide, which blends the abilities, skills and needs of both help-giver and help-receiver. In so doing, a feminist revisioning of the human condition based on interdependency and relational autonomy was advanced as a means to reframe helping relationships and the powerful dichotomy of dependence/independence.

Despite tensions between feminism and disability on the subject of help and helping relationships, this chapter has shown the benefit of striking a conversation between the two. Recognising that everyone is variously dependent might help break down distinctions between independence and dependence, and feminist notions of interdependence and relational autonomy can certainly prove useful in doing this. My view, however, is that even if we state that we are all 'interdependent', disabled people will still be treated as qualitatively different (see also French, 1993b). Disability perspectives are necessary to tackle the power-relations between sighted and blind people, which will not vanish by dismantling the ideology of independence versus dependence (although it would certainly be a progressive step). Such a conversation between feminist and disability perspectives in geography and beyond seems long overdue. I now move on from debates surrounding the social relations of help to consider the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape within the spaces of blind golf.

6

Relations Within: managing identities in the spaces of blind golf

6.1 Introduction

To identify, or be identified, as disabled has largely been conceived of in negative terms (Shakespeare, 1996a). As highlighted in chapter two, Chouinard (2001) has criticised geographic research for its emphasis on external, physical barriers and disability oppression, marginalisation and exclusion. Whilst this work has political potency, it was argued that it has run the risk of perpetuating the notion that disabled people are tragic, helpless victims of inequality and thus fuelled negative images of what it is to be disabled. As Chouinard has argued, it conjures up images of disabled people's lives as not worth living or how awful it must be to be disabled and experience oppression all the time. This led her to call for geographic research that adds more positive images of disability, showing that disabled people are a rich and diverse group. Both of the preceding chapters have shown that disabling barriers or disabling social relations do not passively overwhelm the blind golfers. This chapter builds upon this analysis to demonstrate how the golfers actively mediate their own identities and relationships in the spaces of blind golf. In particular, I concentrate on the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape.

My use of *identities* rather than *identity* is, of course, deliberate. In chapter two I briefly outlined my theoretical position on the topic of identity. I concurred with feminist disability authors (for example, Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Morris, 1991; Price and Shildrick, 1998; 2002; Shakespeare, 1996a; Thomas, 1999) that the social model of disability must recognise the issue of multiple identities. Drawing upon the work of Butler (1990), I contended that identities are multiple, fractured, contradictory and fluid over space and time. I argued that the notion of an essentialist disability identity as a stable, coherent and fixed category is problematic, instead highlighting the importance of diversity among disabled people and the existence of fractured identities (see also Price and Shildrick, 1998; 2002; see also chapter three). Identifying, or being identified, as a 'blind golfer' is not intrinsically negative yet can be fraught with contradictions. As such, this chapter is not solely about a 'blind identity', but the processes through which particular *identities* are taken up, relinquished, resisted, lost, challenged and held in tension by the players. It is this more nuanced understanding of blind identities that I hope to demonstrate.

This chapter, therefore, further rests upon the notion that identity should be understood as a process and that identities are actively produced. As Richard Jenkins (1996, p.4) argues:

Identity can in fact only be understood as process. As 'being' or 'becoming'. One's social identity – indeed, one's social identities, for who we are is always singular and plural – is never a final or settled matter.

Jenkins (1996) also argues that the politics of a personal identity and the politics of a collective identity are inextricably linked; similarly, Shakespeare argues that positive identification should be viewed as a project "based on self-recognition and recognition by others" (Shakespeare, 1996a, p.103; see also Calhoun, 1990; Peters, 1996). The way in which we think about ourselves and what other people think of us are both significant, and interlinked, processes:

Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us) (Jenkins, 1996 p.5).

Indeed, I treat the golfer's individual identities and collective identities as inseparable; their identities are forged, negotiated and managed through a variety of internal-external processes.

The first section discusses the tensions between the ways in which the golfers are identified by other people and institutions, especially through the process of registration and classification, and the way in which they identify themselves. I demonstrate that there are difficulties in disclosing a 'blind' identity, as well as resisting it as a fixed, negative, medical marker of difference that is given 'master' status. That said, the blind players further discuss the benefits of registration and classification and open up possibilities for the creation of alternative blind identities. The way in which identities are forged and managed in the collective arena of blind golf is, therefore, examined more closely in the following three sections. The identity of 'blind golfer' is forged partly in response to the exclusionary practices of sighted golfers and partly through group formation processes. The second section addresses the formation of a distinctive group identity, and the third section considers the construction of group boundaries. I argue that humour is central to both these processes. In the final section, I argue that group boundaries are never firmly drawn; there are processes that trouble group identities and thus I show the ambiguities and ambivalences in relation to group identity. In combination, this chapter argues that the golfers are not only defined by their blindness, but juggle multiple, contradictory and fractured identities and reclaim agency through this active and fluid process.

6.2 Identification and disclosure

Disability scholars have convincingly shown the ways in which disabled people are identified according to medical categories of difference, especially through external processes such as medical institutions, medical professionals and so on (Shakespeare, 1996a). This identification of disabled people usually focuses on a particular 'impairment group' – such as 'the blind' – and centres on medical definitions (Shakespeare, 1996a p.96). Scott (1969) for example, demonstrates the

way in which blind men are 'officially' labelled 'blind' by external agencies. This section is concerned with external definition and classification, as well as processes where blind golfers reclaim the right to define themselves and challenge being identified only by their visual impairment.

Prior to becoming a member of the SBGS, the golfers have to be registered blind. This often means that they have already been identified as 'partially sighted or blind' by eye 'specialists' before identifying as a blind golfer in the collective context of blind golf. Chapter four demonstrated that the decision to join blind golf is taken voluntarily by the golfers, rather than as part of rehabilitation programmes. In order to become a member of the SBGS, therefore, the golfers must self-identify as a 'blind golfer' as well as be medically classified as a 'blind person'. Neither element is straightforward; there are difficulties and tensions in becoming a 'registered partially sighted or blind' identity as well as taking up the position of a blind golfer. Members of the SBGS, have been assigned a classification by medical professionals, which is a sport classification organised by British Blind Sport. The following golfer explains the categories:

Nick We've got 3 categories in blind golf [internationally], 4 in Scotland. Purely because we accept people into the Society who are registered as partially sighted, although there's very sort of grey areas between each of the categories – B1, 2, 3, 4 in Scotland. ... broadly speaking, B3 is somebody who has what you might just term as 'poor eyesight', or 'deterioratin' eyesight'. B2, the biggest band, at the one end you've got slightly worse B3's and at the other end you've got quite poor eyesight. ... And then B1's, are totally blind to a light perception.

There are both real and perceived losses entailed in these processes of identification and the disclosure of a 'blind' identity. The following player explains how he was 'medically retired' in the early 1980s after telling his employers that he was registered blind. His identity as 'disabled' further presented problems in finding another job:

David although I was medically retired, I never thought I wouldn't actually be going back into another job. And I felt very confident of getting another job and eh, you know, I didn't. Back in the '80s, computing was coming in and so I thought, 'Well, I'll go and do computing'. ... I did a systems analysis and computing course and I had umpteen interviews and become a professional interviewee virtually. Eh, it was all the knock backs - people would only recognise your disability and, you know,

'I can do your job no problem! [Laughs] You know, just give me a chance!' You know, let me in and give me a chance. But it was always the disability, you know, 'If you fall down the stairs, it'll cost us a fortune, you know?'

David's loss of a sighted identity meant that he lost the privileges that had usually been afforded to him as a sighted person. In disclosing his blind identity, he began to experience exclusion from the labour market and subsequently lost his 'work' identity. As Shakespeare (1996a, p.95) explains: "Disabled people are defined as that of a group of people whose bodies do not work; or look different or act differently; or who cannot do productive work". David was now being defined by his impairment, primarily as a medical condition and category fixed rigidly upon him, as well as experiencing the social consequences of discriminatory practices that considered his identity negatively. Similarly, Dyck (1999, p.127) argues from her empirical evidence of women's experiences of domestic and wage labour following diagnoses with MS that:

Disclosure of diagnosis represented a pivotal and dynamic moment in which a 'marked' identity, that of disabled, had a potential to be 'fixed' with uncertain consequences for the women.

The uncertain consequences included losing a job, being unable to get work and failing to gain further promotion and so on (Dyck, 1999 p.127).

This loss of a 'sighted' social identity changes the players' experiences of interactions with other people in golf. Colin describes his transition from identifying as a sighted golfer, to being identified as a blind person through registration and disclosing his identity as a blind golfer:

Colin The thing is that em, it's then, it's when you're registered, you actually feel an embarrassment of actually askin' somebody to look for the ball for you. Now, it's something that happens naturally when you're sighted and you take it for granted because you don't even think about it and then when you're sighted you may well see it to a certain extent, but weather conditions can vary when you don't see it or the ball is gone and you just haven't got an idea. So, really there's an embarrassment factor to get over for a start, of askin' people, 'Can you keep an eye out for ma ball?' And it's silly because, as I say, it's been done naturally when you could see. So, the biggest, the first biggest thing to get over is not to be embarrassed at askin' people.

Colin's take up of the position of 'blind golfer' changes his interactions with other golfers since he feels embarrassed to ask for help. He deconstructs the unmarked

position of 'sighted golfer' and in so doing demonstrates the constructed nature of both categories. He questions why he should feel different about being a blind golfer; he has to deal with the contradictory position of marking himself out as visually impaired – especially as the material reality of his blindness means that someone-else has to watch for his golf ball - at the same time as not wanting to be treated differently from when he was a sighted golfer. His experience questions the way in which people who become impaired seemingly have to "relinquish a non-disabled identity and accept an identity as other" (Shakespeare, 1996a p.104).

The following encounter with a sighted person at a blind golf event, further illustrates the kind of treatment Colin experiences now he discloses his identity as a blind golfer:

Colin told me what had happened to him on the course today when one of the markers¹ asked him if he was 'one of the blind golfers' ... Colin replied that he was and from then on, he said that this marker started to treat him differently and instead of letting him get on with things himself as he had been doing, this marker started to tell him how he should play a certain shot, and the lines of putts etc, and started to tell him what to do. Colin said that he was furious with this. Colin disliked that as 'what gives him the right to think that he can tell me how to play golf or whether my club face is square when he's probably a crap golfer himself!' (Field Notes 08)

This person had been confused about whether Colin was a blind golfer or not because Colin does not live up to his expectations or stereotypes of 'blindness'. The marker therefore settled his own confusion by asking the player directly if he was a blind golfer because this enabled him to identify Colin as 'blind' and treat him 'accordingly'. Now there was no confusion over Colin's identity – and he was only afforded a single, fixed identity during this interaction, unable to escape being defined as 'blind'. Indeed, social identities are significant to such interactions because people change their behaviour to behave in the way they believe is 'right', 'appropriate' and 'acceptable' (see also Keith, 1996).

Of course, Colin did not believe that the way in which the marker began to treat him was appropriate or acceptable. There can be tensions between how the golfers view themselves and how other people view them; to actively forge positive

identities as blind people can be hard work. Keith (1996), Morris (1991) and Shakespeare (1996a) for example, argue that there are difficulties and obstacles to developing a positive and strong identity as a disabled person. Difficulties include the way in which disabled people are socialised into thinking about disability from a medical model perspective, internalising this oppression, which is reinforced by negative cultural images and representations, the lack of positive role models and the way in which disabled people are treated in general (Shakespeare, 1996a p.104). Keith in particular demonstrates that social interactions and encounters with other people often impose a negative identity upon her as a disabled woman: "Strangers do not let us forget that their perception of us is dominated by the ways in which we are different" (Keith, 1996 p.75). Similarly, Kleege (1999, especially chapter one) writes about the negative reactions towards her as a blind woman, in combination with negative stereotypes and cultural representations of blindness and blind people, which meant she avoided identifying herself with the word 'blind'. These socio-cultural processes and practices can also undermine the emotional well-being of disabled people (Reeve, 2002; Thomas, 1999 p.47). For instance, Thomas (1999) argues that social barriers can make disabled people feel hurt, worthless and incapable, which can lower their self-esteem and impact negatively on their sense of person-hood. Managing particular identities of 'blind man' and 'blind golfer' in the spaces of blind golf, therefore, is not a simple process given the social context of these negative reactions and inferior social treatment.

The losses associated with identification can lead some people to conceal their disabled identity (see also Dyck, 1999; Kleege, 1999). The participants highlighted that this may be in the form of refusal to be registered as partially sighted or blind and/or choosing not to become involved in blind golf. The RNIB statistics include the number of people who are registered as partially sighted or blind, and also an estimate of the number of people available for registration. In 1997, there were 33,826 people registered blind and partially sighted in Scotland and the RNIB estimates that there were 87,829 people available for registration in 1996 in Scotland

¹ Sighted volunteers are sometimes used at SBGS events to mark down the scores for each blind player in the tee-off time they have been allocated.

(RNIB, 2000). David highlights that some people may feel there is a stigma to becoming registered as a blind person:

David *I know of people who actually won't go, who would be registered but because they think there's a stigma – which there's certainly no stigma attached: this is a mental thing. And eh, I know a chap actually who helped us organise events in the Local Authority who could be registered blind, but refuses to become registered.*

Colin explains that some people refuse to identify openly as a blind person because of the practical things they may have to give up, as well as worried about losing their job:

Colin *Some people think, 'if I say anythin' about it, I could lose ma job, I could have to stop drivin' ... If you think about havin' to lose your job by sayin' that you can't see because there's no communication to say that you can get this, that and the next thing. I mean the enlightened companies do, but most of them are the large companies – like the BTs – who have visually impaired people in call centres and things like that. But other, you know a normal run-of-the-mill guy might just turn round and say, 'Well, okay I'm sorry, but that's it'. You know, so maybe they don't want to say.*

Dyck's (1999, p.128) participants demonstrated similar fears of disclosure to the blind golfers which led some of the disabled women in her study to employ concealment strategies in which workplace, or non-disclosure. The way in which a blind identity is defined as negatively by social practices, processes and interactions may contribute to visually impaired and blind people not wanting to self-identify as a blind person. Again this links with disability commentators who argue that since disabled people have been socialised to think of themselves in negative ways, then relinquishing a 'non-disabled' identity and accepting a disability identity can be problematic (Morris, 1991; Reeve, 2002; Shakespeare, 1996a; Thomas, 1999).

Not surprisingly, just as there are difficulties in taking up the position of blind person, some participants did not necessarily identify as a blind golfer:

Stevie *'Nah, I'm not gonna play with a bunch of blind guys. I'm not totally blind, I've still got reasonable sight, which ah had at the time'. Usual, you know, but eh, it wasn't still ah started at Blindcraft that ... [one guy said to me] 'Eh, play golf do you?' 'Aye, I used to'. 'You want to try the blind golf'. And he kept at me for a while, and I was 'Och get lost!' So, eventually I said, 'Och well'.*

Watson (2002) presents data on his research participants' accounts of their own sense of identity and many of them clearly do not see themselves as disabled or claim an identity based on their impairment. This leads Watson to conclude that:

it is understandable that many of the informants choose not to identify as a disabled person. In the hierarchy of social values prevalent within British society, which accords little or no status to disabled people, describing oneself as disabled cannot be seen as a positive step. There is no social status to be gained for 'coming out' as disabled (Watson, 2002 p.525).

Watson does not believe this is simply a result of internalised oppression, as discussed above, but, more fundamentally, that his participants are trying to "challenge the idea of normality and refuse to be categorised on the basis of bodily difference" (Watson, 2002 p.525).

The golfers construct multiple and contradictory narratives about registration as well as other processes of becoming blind golfers. Embedded within their stories about the perceived and real losses to identification, they further discuss the benefits to being identified as, or disclosing oneself as, blind person/blind golfer. Just as there are practical considerations for not registering as a blind person, as discussed above, there are practical considerations for being placed on the register:

Colin They [other visually impaired people and medical professionals] don't actually realise how much benefit can be gained from just being on the Register, even to the fact of somebody comin' to talk to you to explain that it's not the end of the world now that your sight's goin'. Because when you're first told that your sight's goin' or your sight has gone, you think it is the end of the world. And you think there's no', why am I, what am I gonna do now? And a lot of us, maself included, I sat there for a couple of months and though, 'That's it'. ... But there's an awful lot available, but it's not explained until you're actually on the Register.

Colin highlights the internalisation of oppression, as indicated by Morris (1991), yet illustrates that it is possible to resist the perpetuation of a negative self-image. The golfers further talk about the benefits certain classifications bring in the spaces of blind golf. David, for example, argues that if people decide to be registered and then join blind golf, there are 'rewards':

David says that 'people will register if they know there will be rewards for it, for example you can travel the world if you're the World B1 champion'. There are rewards for being registered blind, as he elaborated that 'there are many people who don't want to acknowledge that they have 'bad sight', but if they know they can get something out of it, then they might register' (Field Notes 08).

Registration and classification categories are not simply viewed by the golfers as oppressive, negative labels that are thrust upon them, but identities that can also be used productively to their own ends.

Perhaps the most significant example of this is the way in which the golfers perceive some players as having 'cheated' to get classified as a B1 golfer. David highlighted that the benefits of being able to 'travel the world' if achieving the position of B1 World Champion. Duncan also told me that, "*having entered the blind world, there are certain competitions that you can get invited to or play in as a B1, that you can't get into as a B2*". Some participants have argued that blind players have cheated their way into this category due to the benefits they might enjoy as a result. Conversations I had with many players elaborated upon players they thought were 'cheats':

The golfer sitting next to Keith told him he should lie (though in jest, not seriously telling Keith to cheat). Chris said, what like some of them at the World Blind Golf Championship (WBGC)! He then turned to tell me about a guy who won the WBGC previously and how none of them believed he should be playing blind golf as a B1 for he is able to play tennis. This story has been told to me a few times now. Apparently, cheating in order to get into the tournaments is an issue, especially at certain classifications. (Field Notes 05).

This links, of course, to other cases in disability sport, for example the Spanish basketball team at the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney, of competitors 'cheating' their way in to particular categories. This demonstrates both the competitiveness within disability sports and also the way in which negative identity markers can be challenged. It also runs the risk, however, of perpetuating particular stereotypes associated with blind people as 'frauds', which I discussed in chapter four.

The golfers, however, do not consider medical measurements of visual impairment to be accurate, and some would rather, therefore, that sight classifications were eliminated and they simply competed by the golf handicapping system. As Duncan argued:

Duncan *So whatever you do with a sight category it is a subjective test cos the conditions - when we did the World Championships in September, we did sight testing, as required by the International Blind Golf Association. And we had a retired*

ophthalmologist, fairly well known in his field in Scotland, who looked at the variety of forms that we had and said that, 'Ye have a very good range of medical conditions here. The pathology of what you have is quite amazing, but nobody can tell you what you can see. You're the only one who can tell anybody what you can see'. And I don't care what fancy computer tricks they come up with, because my eyes as an individual are basically healthy. ... So all sight testing is there for a purpose, but it will never stop the person that wants to cheat ... some people I'm sure do cheat and some people will always cheat, which is why we should adopt a uniform handicapping scheme which, again as a golfer you'll understand, if you're handicap is right you can play on the day against anybody. So get the handicap right throw the sight categories out the window!

Sight classifications remain a contested area of blind golf, but the key point is that certain players actively 'work' these classifications to their own ends. They are not fraudulently claiming 'blindness', but 'working' the imposed system of sight classifications within blind sport.

The blind golfers also discuss the benefits of participating in golf. For some, it is the enjoyment of exercise and socialising:

Chris *And I've found it one of the best things I've ever done because I was a couched potato beforehand, I'm now healthier and I reap the benefits of it with the people I meet.*

Others especially enjoy the opportunity to compete Internationally against other blind golfers:

Chris *But you saw the international an' that. Now, I mean, you'll no' get as many things as serious, but at the same time the sportsmanship - which wis really good at the time - the competition was really fierce, and it's great. I love it. That's the bit I love. The fact that yer fur yer country. There's no' many people can actually turn round and say, 'I've played for my country'. Okay there's no' a lot of people that want tae be blind and play for their country, but that's outwith our means, we can't help that. But we've still done it and believe me, the passion's there as much as it is for a sighted person. You know, it's there.*

Colin *So actually, in Scottish Blind Golf, I've got a chance of playin' for ma country, you know. There's nothin' prouder or nerve-janglin' [Colin and SM laugh] than that.*

This illustrates what there is to gain from being a blind golfer, especially in the context of joining the SBGS and being afforded the opportunity to represent Scotland.

This section has discussed the processes through which fixed, rigid categories of 'blind person' and 'blind golfer' are created. It has recognised that there are real biological differences that contribute to the process of becoming a blind golfer, yet at the same time these differences are socially constructed in particular ways (see also Thomas, 1999 p.116). Largely through external identification by medical professionals, through interactions with sighted people in the golfing landscape and hegemonic perceptions of blindness, the participants have been treated as *blind* people and *blind* golfers where their blindness is given 'master status'. In this sense, these categories are treated as homogeneous, fixed, stable and negative identity markers that the players, at times, were unable to transcend (see also Dyck, 1999). The blind golfers, however, did not necessarily treat their identities as blind men and blind golfers as negative; they spoke about the losses associated with disclosing these identities, but also the practical benefits and potential rewards. They do not present linear narratives of identity, moving from conflict to resolution with a triumphalist overtone (Shakespeare, 1996a, Kleege, 1999), but articulate the tensions between how they are identified, and how they choose to identify themselves. There are different ways in which blind identities are constructed, therefore, that are not rigid or linear. This begs a closer examination of the identities being managed and forged in the spaces of blind golf. Is there space for alternative *blind* identities? Is there space for being blind *golfers*? Is there space for relinquishing these blind identities at different times in different places? Is there space for the *co-existence* of other identities? It is to these alternative possibilities for resistance, choice and difference that I now turn.

6.3 Forging a distinctive group identity?

'Enjoying the banter': disability and humour

Before going any further, it is necessary to explain what I mean by the term 'blind golf banter'. Banter is a word I used from the very beginning of taking field notes. For example, in my first set of field notes I write that, *'It was great fun today as I was playing, and that I was guiding for Chris who is a good laugh and we have*

great banter' (Field Notes 04). In the second month of ethnography, I describe the atmosphere when I had just arrived at the first Classic of the year as, '*The atmosphere was good-natured with everyone saying hello and mingling with each other having some banter* (Field Notes 05)'. Time and again the idea of banter crops up in my writings about blind golf events, often describing the atmosphere between the players and also between the players and their guides. This banter is evident almost everywhere from the journeys to SBGS events, on the golf course, in the clubhouse and the journey home again. For instance, on one bus journey to a competition, I wrote that, '*I was just able to relax and listen to all the banter*' (Field Notes 07).

At the time of writing field notes, I was not aware how often I was using this term and that the golfers were also using it to describe what they enjoy about blind golf. In one of my final sets of field notes, I write:

Of course, we spent the journey up recalling and recounting various 'blind golf' stories which I would term 'blind golf banter' and feel very much a part of this banter and can join in this. Blind golf banter is about the characters and the people, both players and guides as opposed to blind jokes (although it can involve that too) (Field Notes 09).

'Blind golf banter' is about the mutual teasing and joking between people involved with blind golf, and humour is often at the core of this process. It therefore captures material on blind golf jokes, blind jokes, blind golf stories and the re-telling of these stories.

Few writers have approached the topic of disability and humour (although see Stronach *et al*, 1999). Humour has largely been seen as a negative where disabled people are made fun of (Shakespeare, 1999). This links to Chouinard's (2001) increasing dissatisfaction with the way in which geographers are approaching disability in negative terms. The social and cultural context in which blind golfer banter is positioned, however, does merit attention. This is raised by the very title of an internet article, "Blind Golf! Are you joking?" by Bennett Ward who is a member of the SBGS who writes:

'Blind golf! Are you joking?' – that's usually the reply I get when I tell people I play golf, blind golf. People often think I'm having a laugh, but I can assure you blind golf is as serious as normal sighted golf (Bennett Ward, 2001).

This reaction is very common towards the idea of blind people playing golf and as I stated in chapter four, I have had many people express disbelief when I explain that my PhD project is about blind golf. This common reaction to blind golf as some kind of joke is due to two key things: Firstly, it demonstrates how golf does not exist outside of society and disablist attitudes towards blind people in golf mean their participation is often not treated seriously (see also chapter four). As I discussed in that chapter, this is the social context that the SBGS have to deal with when trying to gain recognition for blind golfers, their organisation and full and equal participation in golf. Secondly, it is also indicative of the wider social and cultural context where blind people are often the butt-end of jokes. We are used to blind people being laughed at and jokes being told about blindness and blind people. Articles in *Disability Now*, for example, have highlighted the prevalence of offensive jokes about disabled people on television and radio that reinforce discriminatory, disablist attitudes and are again, illustrative of the cultural context within which disability jokes are embedded (Calvi, 2003).

In golf, there are various versions of a common joke that exists in 'golf humour', where blind golfers are the butt ends of the jokes, sometimes using Stevie Wonder's name in the joke:

Stevie Wonder and Jack Nicklaus are in a bar. Nicklaus turns to Wonder and says: "How is the singing career going?"

Stevie Wonder replies: "Not too bad, the latest album has gone into the top 10 so all in all I think it's pretty good. By the way, how's the golf?"

Nicklaus replies: "Not too bad, I'm not winning as much as I used to, but I'm still making a bit of money. I've had some problems with my swing but I think I've got that right now."

Stevie Wonder says: "I always find that when my swing goes wrong I need to stop playing for a while and not think about it, then the next time I play it seems to be alright."

Jack Nicklaus says: "You play golf?"

Stevie Wonder says: "Oh, yes, I've been playing for years."

And Nicklaus says: "But ... you're blind, how can you play golf if you're blind?"

Wonder replies: "I get my caddy to stand in the middle of the fairway and call to me. I listen for the sound of his voice and play the ball towards him, then when I get to

where the ball lands the caddy moves to the green or farther down the fairway and again I play the ball towards his voice."

"But how do you putt?", asks Nicklaus.

"Well", says Stevie, "I get my caddy to lean down in front of the hole and call to me with his head on the ground and I just play the ball towards his voice."

Nicklaus asks: "What's your handicap?"

Stevie says, "Well, I play off scratch."

Nicklaus is incredulous and he says to Stevie: "We've got to play a round sometime."

Wonder replies: "Well, people don't take me seriously so I only play for money, and actually I never play for less than \$100,000 a hole."

Nicklaus thinks about it and says "OK. I'm game for that, when would you like to play?"

Stevie says, "Any night suits me."

This joke is telling about stereotypes and ignorance surrounding blindness and blind golfers. Maas and Hasbrook (2001) also open their article on disability and golf with a joke about blind fire fighters which, they argue, illustrates dominant constructions of blind golfers, as well as representations of ability/disability. The key point to highlight is that blind people are often the object of jokes in much popular culture and in sighted golfers' banter.

Whilst this is an important point to make, I want to go further than simply portraying the negative side of humour and think about the ways in which the blind golfers use humour that often resists and challenges these wider representations of blind people. Shakespeare (1999) draws attention to the ways in which humour can be a form of reversal and an act of resistance amongst disabled people. He emphasises that performing a joke rather than being one is a form of reversal from disabled people being passive objects of jokes – being laughed at – to active agents in reclaiming disability. Likewise, Gary Albrecht (1999, p.67) argues that "disability humour can also be emancipating". Furthermore, Albrecht argues that humour "may convey group solidarity" and can act as a form of "social glue" (Albrecht, 1999 p.67).

The contested nature of humour, however, often balances a fine line between what is oppressive and what is perhaps subversive. For example, when four other golfers and I were travelling to an SBGS AGM, the following incident occurred:

We sat on the train and they [the four golfers] elected to sit in the disabled (wheelchair user) part of the train so that there was more room for Stuart and his guide dog. Chris said that 'we can sit here cos we're disabled'. Alistair then decided to push the alarm button thinking that would be funny. Chris said that they wouldn't get into trouble cos they'd just say that there were blind and pushed it by mistake. The voice was heard from the alarm bit asking if assistance was required, to which Alistair replied 'No'. Not surprisingly, an angry voice sounded back saying that someone now had to come along and reset the alarm. Right enough, when Chris said sorry to the guy and explained, 'but we're a blind party' and that they hadn't realised what they had pressed, the guy's tone of voice changed immediately. He said he'd send someone along to reset the alarm, and the guy who arrived told them jokingly, 'No touching!' (Field Notes 03)

The golfers are well aware of society's expectations and stereotypes of them and the golfers are using this subversively to their own ends. Yet at the same time, they are reinforcing typical ideas about blindness. Humour can simultaneously operate in both negative and positive ways, and the social context in which blind golf banter is embedded means that jokes and joking situations will always run certain risks. I now delve into this key aspect of blind golf, however, as I demonstrate the importance of the banter to the formation of a group identity.

Joking with impairment: the assertion of difference

Blind golf jokes are often shared amongst the players where humour is used to assert difference and create a group identity based upon the shared experience of visual impairment. These are generally 'off-the-cuff' joking remarks. For instance, at one competition, we were having a conversation about major golf tournaments, such as The Open:

As we were talking about major tournaments ... Gary joked that Chris should write to the Open Championship Committee to ask if the blind golfers could be (ball) spotters! We all laughed at this. ... Chris said that he should write to them to see if they fall for it! I said that he should try it next April Fool's Day! Gary further joked that they'd be okay at blind holes! [i.e. blind golfers could be spotters at holes where it is a 'blind tee shot'. This is a common phrase used to describe golf holes where you are driving over the brow of a hill say, and, from the viewpoint of a sighted player, you can't see where the ball will land]. (Field Notes 04)

Through this joking comment, Gary asserts his difference as a blind golfer in the context of a sport dominated by sighted golfers. The only reason this joke 'works' is because it mobilises popular belief and ignorance surrounding visually impaired golfers. Gary and Chris are mocking the attitudinal barriers that exist in golf towards

blind people. They are fully aware of their marginalised position where the majority of sighted golfers have little awareness, or understanding, of blindness and blind golf – would the people organising The Open ‘get’ the joke? Gary and Chris seem sceptical of their ability to ‘get’ the joke and that is also what makes their comments humorous.

What is interesting is that impairment is brought into the conversation, but not in a negative way. Gary and Chris acknowledge that they could not be ball spotters at The Open because they are blind, but this is not treated as a big deal. It is an impairment effect that is accepted and talked about with ease. Impairment effects are discussed alongside the social context of prejudice against blind people in golf. Even if attitudes towards blind people in golf were to change, however, these golfers would still be unable to perform a role as ‘ball-spotters’ at The Open. This situation is indicative of the need to explore impairment effects and ableism, in order to revise the social model of disability (Thomas, 1999; see also chapter two).

Another popular joke amongst the players, raised by the above comments, centres on the term ‘blind holes’ in golf. We were all, both players and guides, sitting in the lounge of the clubhouse having coffee, tea and bacon rolls before playing, talking about a future Classic:

As Colin was from [name of golf club], there was also discussion about the Classic which was being held there in a couple of weeks. I said to Colin that I was disappointed not to be able to make it to that one because I’ve heard good reports about his golf club. ... he said it is a great course with quite a few ‘blind’ tee shots which he said means that some of the [golf] professionals don’t like playing there. Alistair joked that it was a perfect course for blind golfers though with all these blind tee-shots. Everyone laughed and Colin added that, ‘aye these tee-shots dinnae bother us!’ (Field Notes 06)

Significantly, it was the players who were making the joke, although both players and guides joined in the laughter. The space of blind golf provides a supportive environment where the golfers can share jokes about their marginal situation as blind golfers. There may be two processes at work here. Firstly, the shared joke contributes to the formation of a shared identity and is thus part of the social bonding of the group (see also Albrecht, 1999). The group of blind golfers however share

their presence with sighted people who act as guides. The second point may be that the blind golfers are using humour to become part of the 'mainstream' – moving from the margins to centre stage – and doing this in a way that they are reclaiming their blindness and their situations as blind people (Shakespeare, 1999). They are moving from being passive recipients of oppressive jokes to active agents in mediating their blind identities and their position in a sport dominated by sightedness.

Often the joking remarks are between the players, which suggest that humour is contributing to a shared identity amongst the (visually impaired) members of the group. This following joke between two of the players, for example, uses their different preferences in light on the golf course as the basis of the joke:

The weather today was bright and sunny, it was a lovely, warm summer's day. This however means different experiences on the golf course to different golfers. Keith, for example, much prefers a day like today for golf - bright and sunny are good conditions for him because he has 'night blindness'. ... Keith was then chatting with Charles at the 17th hole, and Keith made a cheeky comment to Charles, 'what great conditions today, lovely and sunny!' Charles took this cheeky remark in good fettle, laughing and pretending to hit Keith for his cheek! Charles' vision is not good in bright conditions, and so he often wears dark glasses on the golf course or not. (Field Notes 07)

This is an 'in-joke' between two blind golfers. I would not, could not – and should not – have cracked this joke as a sighted golfer. I understood the joke and I remember smiling at their banter, but I would never have *made* this joke. That would be playing with that dangerously blurry line where it becomes an oppressive joke made by a sighted person, and taken as laughing at as opposed to with. This use of humour again demonstrates the safe environment created through blind golf where the players can talk about impairment and receive empathetic laughter in return. Impairment effects on the golf course are an 'everyday occurrence' as opposed to the end of the world or in any way tragic. This mutual recognition and understanding affirms a shared experience and is therefore a binding force amongst the golfers in creating a collective group identity. This joke raises the issue of divisions between the golfers, as if these two golfers did not like each other, the joke could be used as a 'put down' instead, thereby hooking on to the way in which joking with visual impairment can be oppressive even if used between visually impaired people. The

issue of divisions amongst the players is discussed further in the final section, as there is a danger of homogenising blind people in this discussion of a common social identity.

Blind golf jokes and blind jokes are shared amongst the players where humour becomes a way of forging a distinctive group identity. Humour is drawn upon to acknowledge the materiality of being a blind golfer/blind person, as well as the social barriers the golfers face in the sport and beyond. Blind golf creates a space, therefore, for alternative, resistant identities to flourish that challenge those more negative, mainstream views about blind people. The following section elaborates upon the way in which shared experiences solidify this group identity and create group boundaries.

6.4 Solidifying group boundaries? The creation of a blind space

Part of the common experiences shared by the golfers is stories about incidents such as falling into bunkers and burns. Tales of this kind are told and re-told within the group. This kind of banter between the players contributes to solidifying the group identity. One such story is encapsulated by Keith's experience of falling into a bunker on the golf course:

At one point, Keith had been walking along at the side of a green and we turned round after he made a weird noise and realised that he had fallen into a bunker. I was standing next to his mum and dad and Angus, his guide, hadn't been paying attention. Of course, on realising that Keith was okay, we all started killing ourselves laughing. Keith started shouting in jest at Angus that he should've been paying attention and does he call himself a bloody guide! We all just kept laughing together. Keith chatted about this incident with me at a later stage in the day, saying that that was one of the things about blind golf events; that you could do 'blind' things and it wasn't an issue because it was all blind people there together and so you could relax if something like that happened and just laugh it off (Field Notes 08).

Due to feeling part of a group of people in similar circumstances, Keith does not feel that falling into a bunker marks him out. He can relax about being blind when in the space of blind golf. This collective sense of identity is important in this 'safe space'

created by blind golf as a place where visual impairment is a difference, but not marked out as negative amongst the golfers or a big deal.

Significantly, this extract highlights two further key points. Firstly, Keith's comment that it is "all blind people" together is telling because it is precisely not all blind people there together given the presence of guides and other sighted people too. Blind golf produces a *blind* space where he can be comfortable being blind and positively belong to this category of "blind golfer". Humour is part of the social and cultural production of this blind space, as a space which is controlled by blind people, dominated by blind people and that guides are there on blind people's terms - hence why permission or not is given to laugh and make certain jokes. The guides move in and out of this blind space, crossing group boundaries. Secondly, this golfer clearly develops a subversive use of 'blind' that has a broader meaning than a medicalised category and, interestingly, to refer to people within this blind space including sighted persons.

When Paul fell into both a bunker as well as a burn on the same hole, it is interesting to note how others around him, including myself, reacted to this event:

As I was standing up by the next tee, watching the group behind play up one of the par threes, I saw Paul fall into the burn (again, for he did the same another event). He'd played his shot from just short of the burn and I was thinking to myself, 'gosh his guide's not really paying attention to where Paul's walking' and I was worried that he was going to fall into the burn. It's almost like I saw the event before it happened but felt helpless to do anything about it because I was too far away. As Paul slipped into the burn, Gail shrieked loudly 'Paul!' and managed to partially grab his arm, but shouted his name in such a way that was almost blaming him for not paying attention. I heard her giving him a kind of row, muttering something about him following her rather than walking off. I was really shocked at Gail's lack of compassion. As far as I gathered, Paul was walking to the right of her as she was walking over the bridge and it was her who wasn't paying attention. ... When they were closer to the green, Paul went into the bunker to play his shot and while Gail was racking the bunker he walked onto the green, but nearly fell back into the bunker, Gail snapped, 'I wish you'd stand still Paul', but Jock's guide Trevor walked across to guide Paul to his golf ball. I spoke with Paul when he arrived on the next tee, asking him if he was okay, and he said he was okay which wasn't too bad. After they'd played their tee shot to the next green, I walked the next couple of holes with this group. Chris was at one point near enough to shout to Paul about his falling into the burn, Chris said 'are you trying to show me up Paul, it's my job to fall into the ditches!' Paul laughed and Chris explained to him that he'd already fallen into

the sand bunker on the second hole. This was a light-hearted exchange between the two players which I thought was great - perhaps my reaction of shock and concern was too kind of 'protective' rather than Chris' banter that's it's just part of the game of blind golf. Chris has on many occasions said to me that 'blind golf's a dangerous game' and showed me his bruises! (Field Notes 07)

Chris and myself reacted completely differently to this situation. Chris was not bothered about Paul falling into the burn and just made a joke of it. Chris was not laughing mockingly at Paul, but laughing *with* him and by sharing of his own experience, he can demonstrate an empathetic – as opposed to sympathetic – understanding. This, again, is part of fostering a collective sense of identity built upon shared experiences such as this. On the other hand, I reacted in a way that was paternalistic and protective. If the other blind golfers did not think it was a big deal, then why did I? I took this situation seriously rather than jokingly. The banter amongst the players signalled the division that was constructed between those who can share this experience (in this case Chris and Paul) and those who do not (such as myself).

A group identity is forged, therefore, that is based upon being a blind golfer in a space dominated by blind people who can share their experiences as blind people:

Robert *Em, [long pause] I enjoy [name of golf club], but I also enjoy going playing in competitions with the SBGS. Or let's say participating in competitions with my friends in blind golf, cos it means a lot to me, their companionship. A lot of us have a lot in common. I mean, it's a question of turning up there and some will say, 'Hi, Robert, hi Nick, how are you?' And, you know, you've got to go by voices and you're sayin', 'Now who's that!' [Both laugh] I've heard one or two in the same situation myself, you know, not recognising the voices. But we're all there taking part.*

Blind golf has given Robert friendships that extend beyond the golf course. It gives him a sense of companionship, which is heightened by his perception that the group is formed of 'common' people. Robert has to recognise voices in order to recognise particular people and, within blind golf, he shares this experience with others in a similar position. His perception that blind golf is about people who are taking part from the 'same position', as blind people, is an important one to consider. In this collective arena, at times the blind golfers can experience a subversive social space,

which contributes to being a blind person without ignorance and prejudice, but with empathetic understanding, and a sense of shared experience.

In this way, the group identity forged in blind golf is one based on difference, yet a space where being blind is not a defining characteristic to identity formation. Stevie, for example, demonstrates that the shared space of blind golf means that he can relinquish his identity as a 'blind person', even though being identified as a blind golfer is a prerequisite for group membership:

Stevie [pauses to think] it's like anyone else with a disability, if you've eh, got people around you that have similar or worse visual impairments, and you're all in the same boat. You're not out in a limb. You're not eh, treated as different. And eh, you're not - I mean we're the same people inside as anybody else that's fully sighted.

Stevie feels part of a group formed of people with similar circumstances. Like Robert, this is important to Stevie because it is within the space of blind golf that he feels his visual impairment becomes less significant. He is simply treated as a person who happens to be blind rather than blindness marked as central to his identity:

Stevie And it's, they're all great company. Eh, and that they don't dwell on their sight problems, that's by the way, you just so happen to be blind. So what? You know, which is great.

Blind identities, therefore, become part of a mesh of difference and multiple identities; blindness here is not a fixed, singular category that must take master status. Kleege sums up this understanding of blindness and identity:

My blindness is always there. It hangs before my eyes no matter where I look, but this does not mean that I am always looking at it. If I were to list adjectives to describe myself, *blind* would only be one of many, and not necessarily the first in significance (1999 p.4; emphasis her own).

The group boundaries are built upon a collective group identity that is often exclusive to the blind golfers. Having dinner at another blind golf event, there were four of us of sat at the table. Two of us were guides, and the other two were blind golfers. Chris started to make some joking remarks about the food, such as '*Eat your carrots! They help you see in the dark!*' (Field Notes 09). This is one of Chris' favourite jokes whenever there is food on the table with carrots. He likes making this joke not only because of visual impairment, but the fact that he has night-

blindness. We all laughed at this joke. Then Chris and Charles shared laughter about the lemon getting on Chris' fork when eating fish and chips for dinner:

One night, me and Chris were having our meal with Charles and George. Chris was having fish and there was a lemon which he picked up at the same time as a couple of chips, not realising and ended up with 'a mouthfullae lemon', exclaiming that 'I hate when ah do that'. Charles started laughing and said to Chris that, 'I'm glad someone else does that too!' (Field Notes 09)

The sense of shared experience – getting a 'mouthfullae lemon' instead of fish with some chips on the fork - and being able to laugh with each other about this event is indicative of a common social identity in blind golf. The collective identity experienced by the golfers is socially created and by no means 'natural' or 'authentic'. There are many differences amongst the golfers across age, gender, class, employment status and so on. For such a diverse group, there is a strong sense of a shared identity that is about participation in *blind golf* as well as being a blind person. The following section, therefore, moves on to trouble this notion of a distinctive group identity and presents the group identity boundaries as fluid, fractured and fluctuating around multiple identities.

6.5 Troubling group identities

In this section, I firstly discuss the formation of a group identity based on participation in blind golf rather than a distinctive identity as blind people and secondly, by considering divisions that cut across the group in relations to gender, sexual orientation and marital status.

About participation in blind golf rather than being a blind golfer

There are many stories passed on from blind golf events that demonstrate the formation of a group identity on the basis of participating in blind golf. One such story was about one golfer who had telephoned his wife from the pub after one event saying that the train had been delayed and he would be home later than expected. Whilst Cameron was making this phone-call, his fellow blind golfers and a couple of guides were attempting to make train station noises in the background. This story

was re-told time again, especially when we were travelling to and from SBGS events.

This section of field notes gives a flavour of the kind of banter that emerges here:

So it was an early start for us all, but everybody's spirits were high on the bus. Chris started singing 'we-re all going on a summer holiday', and invited me to give a few songs also. I declined that offer! There was plenty banter amongst Chris, Billy, Nick, Morris, Alistair, Keith and Cameron which created much laughter. Cameron was getting slagged off for drinking and getting home late from SBGS tournaments causing his wife to shout at him (Field Notes 06).

Memories of happenings at certain events are often recalled with much humour and laughter. The golfers have a shared past that they can call upon to solidify their group identity. Such stories involve both players and guides. It is not just about the blind golfers, but the group boundaries are widened to include others involved in blind golf whether sighted or not. This story demonstrates the coming together of predominantly male players and guides and them collectively sharing a joke about 'the wife' that, as married men, they can all knowingly laugh about.

Blind golf in this respect is more than just being a blind person at an event organised by a specific organisation for blind people. As emphasised above, memory plays an important part of this collective identity based upon shared experiences at blind golf events. In the following interview segment, Pat and Gus, who are a player-guide partnership, recall a memory from an International Match when the two International teams, players and guides, were travelling back to the hotel on a hired bus from the golf course:

Pat *that international wis the best of the lot oot of the four, wis it four? Four internationals? That wis the best one as far as the socialisin' an' that wis concerned. Even comin' home on the bus. The singin' ...*

Gus *Aye, great wasn't it! [Gus Laughs] That wis a bitae a wind up an' a'.*

Both Gus and Pat enjoy the banter of blind golf events. Again, both player and guide are part of this re-telling of stories and recounting of experiences from past events. This nostalgia brings the group of people participating in blind golf together.

Many participants talk about the notion of 'camaraderie' in blind golf that is part of its function as a sport. Colin told me that:

Colin *It's the camaraderie, there's always a - it's a great character builder. So you benefit from that, and from the fact that it's a great leveller. It doesn't matter, you could be playing with em, the Bishop of Scotland, and a Doctor or an MP, but when you get on the golf course you may be the one that they're all lookin' up to. As in, you know, it's a great leveller, it doesn't matter, once you get that club in your hand, it's you and all the vagaries that's involved with it ... But it's definitely, oh there's many benefits from it, whether it's the social contact or ... [The group of about 6,7 older men sitting at a table near us start to get louder with their banter and mocking one another which stops Colin mid-sentence and then says: 'Nobody has any fun at this game, do they!'] We both laugh. Which is exactly what Colin was trying to describe] ... Nobody enjoys themselves in this game, I tell ye!*

Camaraderie is more than social contact with other people, the enjoyment and banter. Colin describes camaraderie as feeling part of a group that has a common purpose – golf – that brings very different people together on the same level. The camaraderie in golf is thought of here as a social blender; it is part of feeling included. The camaraderie is more than being a blind golfer, but participation in golf events alongside other people interested in the sport.

This camaraderie and social identity as golfers is further illustrated by Nick:

Nick *[pauses] It's always, well you know yourself, it's always nice to go to any particular event or to em a bounce game and play well and walk off the course and say, 'Well, if I had done that I would've had an even better score'. So I think for me, [pauses] at least 50% if not a lot of the percentage is the social side of it. Em, to get out and, you know, to just talk about the golf and say, 'I played absolutely crap today', you know to do the post-mortem on the golf and then forget about it hopefully and goin' have a few beers or somethin' or a meal or anything like that. I think it's the social aspect for me. That's definitely the benefit for me. Em, and if you go out and play well then you can have a bit of an extra celebration or a better - you feel when you go to your bed at night. ... I don't know without the golf what I would've been doin' actually. Probably wouldn't of been livin' in Scotland. But certainly, the vast majority for me is the social side.*

Given the different kinds of events organised by the SBGS from individual strokeplay, matchplay events, team events and player-guide events, both players and guides can become part of this group identity. David sums up this idea of group identity being formed on the basis of participation rather than a distinctive identity as a blind person/golfer:

David *Eh, there's the whole social aspect to it. ... You know, the integration, the partnerships, the companionship and the camaraderie part of it. Because that's a huge part of blind golf - you must've noticed that [SM: hm] - a huge part of the blind golf. ... there is that tremendous, when you think about it - well I see it*

anyway - that the golf, okay the golf is important, but then again the social side of it is so important because that's what, you know, the people you can go and talk about your golf or forget about your golf. And there's just that camaraderie and friendship ... so you're just a big happy family really.

Group identities are thus being formed on the basis of a distinctive identity about being a blind golfer, as well as about participation in blind golf. Both these identities are active in the spaces of blind golf, although there are slippages between them. Much of the discussion so far has centred upon the gelling aspects of the group identity. The construction of group boundaries, however, is a slippery process of inclusion and exclusion. I now turn my attention more closely to examine the divisions created within the group.

Who's in and who's out

In amongst all this banter – all these blind golf jokes, memories and stories – that glues the group of golfers together, there are jokes which lead one to think more deeply about what kind of group identity is being created. Blindness in part has been a basis for this collective group identity, but is by no means the only marker of social difference that plays a part in the formation of group boundaries. The above subsection also noted this. This is not only a group of blind golfers, however, but also a group of predominantly *male* blind persons. The story about ‘phoning the wife’ above raised the gendered aspect of the group. At various events there are often shared jokes about ‘the wife’ and ‘getting away from the Mrs’ which many of the golfers – most of whom are in heterosexual, married relationships – join in. On the train journey to one blind golf event, for example, there was a series of jokes passed between the golfers about their wives:

There were still the usual jokes about ‘getting away from the wife’ though and how some of them use golf as escapism from ‘the wife’ which I’m not sure whether they’re joking or not. They often talk about being scared of their wives and today was no different. Stevie said that the good thing now is that if he looks straight at his wife, he can’t see her face and so he can’t see the look she’s giving him. Chris said, ‘aye Stevie, I’m scared of your wife!’ Stevie said that if he’s close enough, she just kicks him instead now rather than giving ‘an evil’! (Field Notes 06)

The group is establishing a common identity on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation and marital status. In asserting their 'husband' identity, their identities as blind men are placed as part of a mesh of difference.

Banter at an SBGS meeting further demonstrates the gendered nature of group identity. One member complained about the difficulty of playing in all the Order of Merit events in order to qualify for International selection. Another member's response is captured below:

Keith added that he could play in all the events, but he'd be divorced by the end of the year. This raised laughter in agreement from other members - because many also choose to keep holidays aside for family etc rather than using them all up on blind golf events, even though by the sound of the laughter they would prefer to be at blind golf events if it wasn't for 'the wife'. (Field Notes 03)

Being a married, heterosexual man is central to the process of group formation. As a new member of the SBGS, Colin was using humour and these gender jokes as a way to establish himself as part of the group. For instance, joking in the clubhouse before playing at one event:

Colin was sharing with everyone that he was just pleased to get away from his wife, but that he was still negotiating being 'allowed' to attend other blind golf events (Field Notes 06).

Colin knows how to get the other golfers and guides to laugh. By cracking this joke, he establishes his position as an 'inside' group member. The sense of experience the golfers appear to share with regard to their married life is an important criterion of group membership, as are their experiences of visual impairment and blindness. The joke fosters a sense of collective identity for those married, male golfers that form the basis of the group. The particular versions of masculinity (and femininity) invoked are used in processes of group formation (and maintenance).

Of course, not everyone may feel part of this kind of group and it is perhaps no coincidence that there is only one female member of the Society. For myself, joking about married life can create both connections and exclusions. Yet there was one time I remember feeling distinctly outside of the group:

I was pissed off on the train journey because there was Chris, me, Alistair, Rik, Cameron, Gary, Phil, and Gary's guide. Therefore I was the only woman. I went to

the toilet just before we arrived at our destination and when I came out of the toilet everyone was in fits of laughter. I was like, I wonder what they are laughing about, almost getting paranoid that they were laughing at me because everyone was starting to get a bit quiet as I was walking nearer the tables. It transpired that Gary's guide had told one of his jokes that was 'not fit for a lady to hear' and consequently they also joked about how he had been waiting for me to go to the toilet the whole journey time before he could tell that joke. I felt very excluded at this point on the basis that I was a woman, for example, what if a bunch of sighted golfers were away with one blind golfer and they waited until the blind person went to the toilet before they could tell a disability joke? (Field Notes 09)

Humour is both a gelling and separating agent. It both breaks down group identity boundaries as well as creating them. Incidentally, the golfers and guides also tell oppressive disability jokes, for example jokes that demonstrate their prejudice and ignorance surrounding deafness and deaf people, as well as racist jokes, which is perhaps telling of the taken-for-granted white identity of the group. This links back to the second section, which discussed that there can be a fine line between the use of humour as oppressive and its emancipatory potential (Shakespeare, 1999). Evidently, humour may "convey group solidarity" and act as a form of "social glue" (Albrecht, 1999 p.67), yet there may also be ambiguities and ambivalences in relation to group identity, and positions of insider/outsider and dynamics of in/exclusion.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that identifying, or being identified, as a blind golfer is not intrinsically negative, yet can be fraught with contradictions. The first section demonstrated the limitations of fixed, biomedical categories of difference that continue to impose upon the participants' everyday lives. For instance, the players highlighted both perceived and real losses to identification and disclosure of a 'blind identity', especially when it was fixed upon them as a singular, medical marker of difference. These essentialist categories and negative definitions do not go unchallenged or unmodified. A deeper analysis of socio-spatial practices, interactions and relations has shown the ways in which the golfers reclaim their blindness and situations as blind people/blind golfers. The participants both worked

with biomedical identifications and against them. Identities as blind golfers are forged partly in response to the exclusionary practices of sighted golfers and partly through group formation processes. In particular, I emphasised the importance of humour to the formation of alternative, resistant identities as blind person/blind golfer. Simultaneously, humour was a way of forging a distinctive identity that was about being a blind golfer, as well as about participating in blind golf. Although blind golf banter played a major part in these processes, it appeared humour had inclusionary as well as exclusionary effects. Evidently, the boundaries of group identities are seemingly never firmly drawn. A key aspect was the formation of a group based on partially shared identities which allowed various forms of social interaction to become 'banter' and thus perpetuated a fluid (and fragile) group identity.

The fluid and fluctuating nature of group boundaries is not surprising given the multiple aspects of identity that the golfers constantly juggle in their lives. This chapter has argued that the golfers are not only defined by their blindness – although it is given 'master status' at particular times, in particular spaces and places. Other differences cut across the category of 'blind golfer', created blurred and shifting boundaries to this social identity. Whilst this thesis recognises the importance of barriers and inequalities blind people face in accessing, and participating in, the sport of golf, this chapter has shown the golfers' ability to act as active agents in mediating their own identities and lives as blind people. In emphasising their multiple and fractured identities, I have shown the possibility for choice, resistance and difference to flourish in the spaces of blind golf. It is a space where particular identities were taken up, relinquished, resisted, lost, challenged and held in tension by the players. This chapter therefore concludes by arguing for a more nuanced understanding of disability identities.

7

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined experiences of accessing, and participating in, golf among blind players in Scotland. In bringing this thesis to a close, I firstly provide an overview of the project's development. In so doing, I summarise the project's perspective in relation to the debates within which this thesis was shaped, as well as the gaps it sought to address. The substantive chapters are then discussed, as I revisit key points that are intended to pull the thesis together. In the second section, I consider how this thesis has contributed to debates concerned with geographies of disability and sport. In returning to these broader debates, I also reflect upon possible limitations of this thesis and suggest potential directions for future research.

7.2 Interweaving relations outwith, between and within

Key challenges and controversies in social model thinking were opened up in chapter two and extended throughout this thesis. I argued that the social model of disability is dominated by Marxist, materialist analyses that have examined structural barriers that create exclusion. Whilst this work has political potency, it has run the risk of homogenising the experience of disability and neglected issues of how disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. In section 2.4, I

elaborated upon a substantial gap in the disability literatures, concerned with sport, which the thesis hoped to address through a socio-spatial analysis of golf. Building upon disability studies in geography that turn their attention to the social structuring of space (for example: Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Butler, 1998; Kitchin, 1998), I prioritised social attitudes, interactions and reactions towards blind golfers that challenge their right to be in the 'non-disabled' spaces of golf. I aimed to stress, therefore, the importance of disabling barriers that operate at the level of everyday prejudice, stares and reactions towards disabled people by foregrounding the subjective experiences of individual disabled people and the oppressive attitudes they face (Chouinard, 1997; 2001; French, 1999; Keith, 1996; Morris, 1991; 1996). In this respect, my approach remained 'barrier-focused' even though it did not concentrate on external, structural barriers such as physical access, labour market exclusion, state policies and so on. In order to address my research aims, I used participant observation at events organised by the SBGS alongside ethnographic interviews with blind golfers. Three key themes emerged from data analysis and were dealt with in three substantive chapters: chapter four considered the golfers' relationships with (sighted) others predominantly outwith blind golf; chapter five focused upon the interpersonal relationships between players and guides; and chapter six explored how the blind golfers managed relationships within the spaces of blind golf. This section summarises issues that emerge from the chapters taken as a whole.

Each of these chapters found that disabling barriers influenced the blind golfers access to, and participation in, the game. These barriers were created through disabling socio-spatial practices. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 demonstrated that disabling attitudes in particular impacted upon organisational and personal journeys into the sport. The most enduring attitude was that blind people cannot, and do not, play golf. Because sight is taken-for-granted as a prerequisite for participation, many people and organisations reacted in disbelief or amazement that blind people played golf and/or ridiculed those who do. Some blind golfers had held this attitude also. For those who gained access, however, their presence was a transgression; it disrupted the boundaries of the social space of golf that had previously been naturalised and codified as a 'non-disabled' space. Even once the players accessed the sport, they

continued to experience disabling socio-spatial relations. As I exemplified in section 4.4, disabling barriers are embedded in the 'everyday' encounters in the golfing landscape between blind and sighted people. Following the work of Chouinard (1997; 2001), Cresswell (1996), and Kitchin (1998) in particular, this chapter emphasised that ableism and ableist practices served to keep the golfers 'in their place', that is marginalised and excluded *from* the sport, and very much 'out of place' *in* the sport. These actions and reactions to their transgression challenged blind people's right to access the 'non-disabled' spaces of golf, and limited their full and equal participation within the game.

Subtle and not so subtle discriminatory actions, and reactions, towards blind golfers were also evident in the player-guide relationship. Many players were treated as inferior and incapable, and these unequal power relations between blind and sighted people permeated this relationship. This resulted in unequal social relations of help, discussed in section 5.3, when many guides exerted power, control and authority over the players, especially in decision-making processes on the golf course. In chapter six, this argument was developed further when I discussed how blind identities are often 'fixed' as a negative, medical marker of difference that is given 'master' status. Blind identities were controlled by the way in which other people and institutions identified 'a blind person' and 'a blind golfer'. The exclusionary practices of other golfers, and processes of registration and classification, meant that it was difficult for blind golfers 'to be' in the social space of golf. Examining the social structure of space, therefore, found that there were less tangible barriers that diminished their full and meaningful involvement in the sport. There was insufficient evidence to claim that blind golfers were fully included just because they were able to become members of golf clubs and the SBGS, and compete in golf competitions.

These disabling barriers did not passively overwhelm the blind golfers; the participants actively mediated these relations and relationships. In chapter four, the agency of the players was evident in their challenges to, and resistance of, established norms in golf. Blind golfers did not simply accept patronising attitudes

and stereotypes, but challenged the prejudice and ignorance towards them both individually and as a group through the SBGS. For instance, the SBGS actively resists disabling barriers with policies intended to increase blind people's access to, and participation in, the game. They try and work with golf clubs, for example, to counteract stereotypes of how blind people are expected to behave and move around space. In chapter five, I also argued that the golfers were not passive recipients of unhelpful help. Some players challenged the taken-for-granted superior position of a guide and negotiated for control in the relationship; there were, what I termed 'power-struggles'. Furthermore, there were not just disabling accounts of help. Many players contended that the relationship between player and guide must be viewed as a 'team'. I therefore offered an alternative account of helping relationships in section 5.4, which was influenced by feminist notions of interdependence and relational autonomy.

My examination of the processes through which identities as 'blind golfers' take shape in chapter six further developed this line of argument. Drawing upon the work of Butler (1990) and certain disability theorists (especially Price and Shildrick, 1998; 2002; Shakespeare, 1996a), I argued that the notion of an essentialist disability identity as a stable, coherent and fixed category is problematic. Indeed, this chapter demonstrated that essentialist categories and negative definitions do not go unchallenged or unmodified. Rather, I highlighted the importance of diversity among disabled people and the existence of fractured identities (see also chapter two and below). The participants were never overwhelmed by a negative disability identity or disability oppression, but showed that there were possibilities for choice, resistance and difference. I found that humour, which was the core of 'blind golf banter', was significant to the formation of alternative, resistant identities as a blind person/golfer. It demonstrated the ways in which the golfers reclaimed their blindness and situations as blind people/golfers. They moved from being passive recipients of oppressive jokes to being active agents in mediating their blind identities and their position in a sport dominated by sightedness (see also Shakespeare, 1999). I thus presented a richer and more complex picture of 'what it means to be disabled'.

An ongoing argument, therefore, was that there were many complexities and contradictions within the players' experiences of accessing, and participating in, golf. For example, chapter four highlighted that the SBGS seemed to play with dominant discourses of paternalism and patronage in contradictory ways in order to gain access to the sport and sustain their participation. The SBGS and its members at times resisted patronising and sympathetic reactions towards blind golfers, but simultaneously used them to get courtesy of golf courses, reduced club subscriptions and so on. In chapter five, I found that the player-guide relationship was a complicated and multifaceted relationship, which was fractured with many tensions and various axes of power. I highlighted that many players experienced inappropriate, controlling guiding practices, whilst at the same time using these guides to secure their freedom to participate. A key point, made in section 5.3, was that the players had to juggle the contradiction between recognising the materiality of their visual impairment and their right to receive assistance to enable them access to golf on the one hand, and on the other, the difficulty of being dependent on help in a society that values individualism, autonomy and independence (see also Swain, French and Cameron, 2003; French, 1993b; Tronto, 1994). Power-struggles between player and guide included other complexities; for instance, their inter-personal relations were pervaded by class, gender, age, status and family relationships as well as the unequal social dynamics between help-receivers/help-givers, blind golfer/sighted person and so on.

Chapter six argued that blind golf is a space where particular identities were taken up, relinquished, resisted, lost, challenged and held in tension by many players. In section 6.2, I demonstrated that the golfers constructed multiple and contradictory narratives about registration as well as other processes of becoming blind golfers. They discussed the perceived and real losses to identification as well as the benefits to being identified as, or disclosing oneself as, a blind person/blind golfer. In my discussion of group identity processes, I argued that blind golf jokes and blind jokes shared amongst the players demonstrated that humour became a way of forging a distinctive group identity. This lead me to claim, in section 6.4, that blind golf produces a blind space where the players can be comfortable being blind and

positively belonging to the category of 'blind golfer'. This argument was further complicated, however, because there was evidence to suggest that this group boundary was fluid, fractured and fluctuating around multiple identities. I thus troubled the notion of a distinctive group identity based on being a blind golfer/person in section 6.5 by considering divisions that cut across the group in relation to gender, sexual orientation and marital status. In this context, I argued that humour was both a gelling and separating agent because it had inclusionary as well as exclusionary effects; it broke down group identity boundaries as well as creating them. Just as the boundaries between who is 'in place' and 'out of place' were seemingly never firmly drawn, neither were positions of 'who was in' and 'who was out' the space of blind golf. A key point was the formation of a group based on partially shared identities, which allowed various forms of social interaction to become 'banter' and this perpetuated a fluid (and fragile) group identity.

Collectively, therefore, these chapters have supported a more nuanced understanding of geographies of disability. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to juggle these complex, contradictory and fractured stories and observations about accessing, and participating in, blind golf. Following this recap, I want to reflect upon the contribution this thesis has made to the wider debates opened up in chapter two, as well as suggest potential limitations of this thesis and directions for future research. These are not treated as separate issues, but interwoven throughout the following section.

7.3 Limitations and directions for future research

As stated in chapter two, a number of geographers had criticised their discipline for failing to adequately acknowledge the significance of disability as a dimension of human experience and valid area of geographic research (Chouinard, 1997; Gleeson, 1999a; Imrie, 1996a). I noted that over the past decade, there have been a growing number of contributions on geography and disability. This thesis has contributed to this sub-disciplinary area by supplementing and advancing challenges

to the marginalisation of disability issues in Geography. It has also disrupted Geography's particular preoccupation with 'the visual' (see section 2.5) by focusing on the experiences of blind people, which have been sidelined by a discipline that presumes sightedness as 'the norm' and privileges vision in its claims to knowledge (see also section 2.5). I would like to highlight some specific ways in which this project has taken forward debates surrounding disability and, in so doing, suggest potential directions for future research. These reflections are organised around five subsections: firstly, I reconnect with debates surrounding research design and research practices; secondly, I discuss the importance of socio-spatial analyses to studies on disability; thirdly, I emphasise the relevance of geographies of disability to future research on sport; fourthly, I suggest that disability research could further work on psycho-emotional disablism and link to the burgeoning literatures on emotional geographies; and finally, I reflect upon the issue of disability identities.

Research design and research practices

This thesis did not intend to represent the experiences of all blind golfers, and is a situated account which openly offered a particular story co-constructed through the players' narratives as well as observations of socio-spatial practices associated with blind golf events. There were sound practical reasons for choosing SBGS events to conduct the research (see section 3.3), but this limited the kinds of participants that were involved in the study. An issue that was raised during questions at conference presentations on this project concerned the experiences of visually impaired and blind people who remained outwith golf and/or the SBGS. Because my thesis included those who had accessed the sport, as well as those who self-identified as blind golfers, I was asked about people who gave up golf and were still excluded, or who did not identify with blind golf or as a blind golfer; how could I have included blind people who continued playing outwith the context of the SBGS or those who had given up playing altogether? To try and uncover these experiences would have been extremely difficult, not least because the SBGS has found it difficult to make contact with such blind persons over the past two decades despite various 'spreading the word' measures.

On reflection, however, the participants did help tackle such questions because they had gone through complex processes of in/exclusion to arrive as a member of the SBGS. It captured experiences of being excluded and playing golf as a blind person outwith the SBGS through their personal journeys into blind golf. To research those who remain outwith is perhaps impossible; it may be extremely difficult, yet more achievable, to find visually impaired and blind people who play golf without joining the SBGS or identifying as a 'blind golfer'. As disability researchers, how can we (or do we) include a range of participants to gain a deeper insight into processes of in/exclusion? How can we (or do we) include those who are excluded from participation in sport, especially if they have previously been involved?

As this thesis has shown, the dynamics of in/exclusion are more complicated than simply access to a sport, but future projects might try to gain a deeper insight by including disabled people beyond the sport itself or 'specialist' provision.⁷ For example, although some of the participants played their golf with the SBGS and with local golf clubs, a focus on visually impaired and blind people playing golf outwith the SBGS may have raised interesting questions around the provision of sport for disabled people. Future research might actively recruit participants who have *not* joined a specific disability sport organisation. This might help explore questions over what is more 'inclusive': being a blind person in golf, or being a blind golfer in blind golf? Should sports policies aim to increase participation among blind people in their local golf clubs and 'mainstream' events, and/or be providing opportunities to develop within blind golf? Should blind golf be developed as a sport in its own right or as a means of extending access? I leave these questions open for further debate and discussion because there are no easy, or straightforward answers. Future studies, however, might adopt a research design that is appropriate for answering these kinds of questions.

Linked to research design, an interesting methodological point was raised when analysing and writing about the player-guide relationship. In section 5.4, I highlighted that I was initially guilty of homogenising 'guides' and 'players' into

groups of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed'. I had to re-interpret my initial assumptions that 'all guides were oppressors' and learn from participants that the picture was a more complicated one, fractured with various axes of power as well as alternative possibilities for helping relationships in blind golf through 'team partnerships'. John Davis (2000, p.200) tells of a similar research experience, albeit in the context of education:

At first we perceived conflict between disabled children and adults (e.g. teachers) as a group versus group conflict. We, at first, characterised the teacher-child relationship as that of oppressor and oppressed. However, children taught us that not all teachers were alike and, therefore, that their oppressors could not be neatly packaged into homogenous groups.

I had 'sided' with the players, as an oppressed group, and in so doing, had assumed the guides were a homogenous group of oppressors. My earlier assumptions had limited my understanding of the player-guide relationship.

This brings me back to the methodological problems with the emancipatory research paradigm discussed in section 3.2. I argued that an underlying assumption in this approach is that disabled people are a unified group of people who share one agenda and researchers must decide if they are 'for or against' this position. This project has convincingly demonstrated that there are multiple perspectives among the blind golfers, and that participants – both players and guides – were differentiated groups. I further emphasised that there were connections and differences between sighted guides and blind golfers because people occupy multiple, shifting, changing and contradictory identities (see especially chapter six). If I had adopted the emancipatory paradigm and its commitment to the social model's theoretical position on disability identity, it could have placed a methodological straightjacket on the research that restricted my analysis and willingness to explore the complexity of processes of domination and subordination. Thomas (1999, p.155) argues that:

Issues surrounding disability research, whilst apparently straightforward ('whose side are you on?') are thus, in practice, complex and difficult to resolve. There are no easy answers.

I think researchers have to be open and flexible about the way in which they conduct disability research. Given the complicated nature of research practice and complexity

of subjective experiences of disability, I remain unconvinced that the emancipatory model is a means to resolve ethical and political issues.

Advancing socio-spatial analyses of disability

The approach taken in this thesis has drawn attention to the ways in which disabled people feel, or are made to feel, in different social spaces. The project thus demonstrated the ways that blind golfers were marginalised and excluded through subtle, and not-so-subtle, socio-spatial practices. This highlights the problematic nature of social space for disabled people. Disabling attitudes, remarks, assumptions and reactions towards blind golfers impacted on their access to, and sense of inclusion in, golf. Space was not treated as a neutral backdrop or passive container to these social relations. Rather, social practices and relations were viewed as constituted in, and by, space (Kitchin, 1998; Lefebvre, 1991; Sharp, 1999). Two key points emerge from these findings, both of which are relevant to future studies on disability.

Firstly, as argued in chapter two, it is perhaps easier to analyse external, physical barriers in society that disable people with impairments than to question disabling attitudes and, at times, unintentional, taken-for-granted disabling socio-spatial relations (Chouinard, 2001). The disabling nature of the social environment, therefore, may be harder to challenge and change. As Young (1990, p.124) contends, society enacts oppression largely through “feelings and reactions, and in that respect oppression is beyond the reach of law and policy to remedy”. If social model theories continue to emphasise socio-spatial structures at the expense of socio-spatial practices, then less tangible barriers will persist and this level of inequality will remain active in disabled people’s lives. Because disability discrimination does not just occur at the level of physical barriers or created through structural inequality, future studies must utilise appropriate theoretical frameworks in order to reveal, understand and tackle other barriers such as disabling socio-spatial relations. This thesis has shown that discriminatory attitudes towards blind people in golf influenced their everyday life, and thus must not be neglected by disability research.

The second key point, linked to the above suggestion, is connected to the work of Imrie (2001; see also chapter two) and an excellent example of what geographers can offer to research on the lived experiences of disability. Previous emphasis on physical barriers, especially in geographical studies of disability, is largely based upon a notion of 'barriers' that has connotations of *physical* space. This suggests that space is defined in terms of physical barriers and obstacles, and a mere container for social practices. The approach taken in this thesis - especially building upon the work of Imrie (2001), Chouinard (1997; 2001) and Kitchin (1998), and influenced by Cresswell (1996) and Lefebvre (1991) - is that barriered and bounded spaces need to be discussed in physical, social and imaginary ways. I find this especially appealing for studies of disability where the notion of 'disabling barriers' is often used in the narrow sense of large-scale, external, structural barriers such as state policy or physical access. Social model theories must recognise the importance of analysing the spatiality of social relations as a vital part of disabled people's lived experiences of disability oppression (see also Chouinard, 2001; England, 2003; Kitchin, 1998). It is worth emphasising again, therefore, that 'barrier-freedom' for disabled people can only be achieved through a combination of approaches which recognise physical and social barriers, operating at a variety of different levels through complicated socio-spatial processes, in the everyday lives of people with impairments (Butler and Bowlby, 1997; Butler and Parr, 1999; Chouinard, 1997; Imrie, 2001).

Promoting geographies of disability and sport

This project has opened up a fruitful avenue for future research in the neglected area of geographies of disability and sport. The blind golfers have shown that access to, and participation in, sport for disabled people is an important concern and needs to be taken seriously by geographic and disability research. Sport presents an exciting and interesting lens through which to analyse disability issues (see also Carlisle Duncan *et al*, 2001). It is especially relevant for studying processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to disability due to the way in which sport can reflect, reproduce as well as resist the marginalisation and exclusion faced by disabled people more generally. Golf may be produced as a 'non-disabled' space that

reproduces disability discrimination, but I demonstrated that the social space of golf did not go unmodified or unchallenged. Their transgression exposed disabling socio-spatial practices that exist in golf. Blind golfers have pushed the social boundaries of the sport and in turn golf has enabled them a space to resist disabling attitudes, images and inequalities. Future studies might also choose the contested spaces of sport as means to analyse the subtleties and complexities of ableism and ableist geographies.

But how much has changed in golf in relation to disability? And how unique a platform is sport for challenging social inequalities? In a recent article on the social power of sport as it pertains to race and ethnicity, Douglas Hartmann (2003) uses an autobiographical account of cricket by C.L.R James called *Beyond a Boundary*. He argues that James' narrative exemplifies that "sport was not only a site where racial stereotypes and hierarchies were reproduced and reinforced, but also a space where they could be effectively questioned, challenged and changed" (Hartmann, 2003 p.453). Hartmann agrees with James that sport can provide marginalised and excluded groups a form of cultural capital to challenge racial inequality, but does not share his optimism on all counts. He presents limitations and qualifications to this position with examples such as the way in which sporting practices in the USA have exacerbated racial stereotypes as well as questioning James' uncritical acceptance of gender inequalities. Similarly, there are persistent barriers to full and equal participation in golf for blind people. For instance, how promising is sport as a social force when the participants are still being patronised and pitied when playing golf? The discourse of rehabilitation also looms large and disability sport is colonised by it; even though there are benefits and uses to sport, which many people enjoy (including blind golfers), disabled people's participation becomes interpreted as something different due to this powerful discourse. The extent of social transformation is perhaps limited within, and by, the institution of sport.

Furthermore, it is largely white, heterosexual, blind men who have access to blind golf. The SBGS was inclusive in relation to some 'differences' and exclusionary in relation to others. For example, it is inclusive of different age groups,

but not in relation to women, sexual minorities or racialised groups. Although this thesis usefully demonstrated the complex dynamics of in/exclusion and noted the gendered nature of blind golf, future projects could, for example, contribute to an exploration of disabled women's experiences of sport (for example, Kolkka and Williams, 1997). This bridges the gap between literatures on disabled people and sport that can exclude questions over other axes of social exclusion, and work on sport that excludes disability in discussion of 'race', gender and sexuality (although see Stone, 2001). What kinds of disabling barriers and questions over disability identities might this uncover? Where might such a focus take debates over the accessibility and availability of golf for disabled people? How much resistance and change is possible through the social space of sport?

Emotional geographies and psycho-emotional disablism

So far I have argued for more research on disability and the spatiality of social relations and promoted work on disabling social relations in the context of sport. Recently, however, some geographers have argued that the emotional content of social relations have been neglected in human geography and thus called for human geographies to embrace emotional relations (Anderson and Smith, 2001). In an editorial on emotional geographies, Kay Anderson and Susan Smith highlight key areas that could benefit from "an awareness of how emotional relations shape society and space" (Anderson and Smith, 2001 p.9). For example, they suggest that economic geographers could tackle questions of workplace performance in terms of emotional relations as well as issues of wages, working conditions and so on (Anderson and Smith, 2001 p.8). Work on emotional relations has not been unduly neglected, however, since feminist geographers in particular have noted the place of emotions in geographies of fear (for example: Koskela, 1997; Mehta and Bondi, 1999; Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1989). More recently, the field of emotional geographies is producing interesting analyses of counselling practices (Bondi and Fewell, 2003), research practices (Bondi, 2003; Laurier and Parr, 2000; Valentine, 2003), agoraphobia and the subject of self-help (Davidson, 2002); welfare reform (Haylett, 2003), shopping (Williams *et al.*, 2001), music and identity construction (Wood, 2002) and discourses of asylum and terrorism (Ahmed, 2002).

This burgeoning literature on emotional geographies has connections with recent work on emotional disablism in Disability Studies. Thomas (1999) has argued that a social relational definition of disability must include the psycho-emotional effects of disablism. The first-person accounts of disability she uses to illustrate this point, cover issues such as painful feelings of rejection, self-doubt and sadness, poor self-esteem, hurt, fears of adverse reactions and so on. Thomas (1999, p.60) therefore states that: "Disability is about both 'barriers' to 'doing' and barriers to 'being'", especially since the lived experiences of disability suggest that disabled people's psycho-emotional well-being can be undermined by social barriers. Donna Reeve (2002) has also advanced work on the ways in which the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability are created and maintained within society. Drawing upon Foucault's concept of 'technologies of power', Reeve demonstrates how the gaze and self-surveillance controlled the bodies of disabled people and how this influenced their emotional well-being. She concludes, however, that disabled people can contest and resist the psycho-emotional effects of disablism. Work on geographies of disability likewise could make room for the place of emotions and take forward this work by addressing the spatialities of emotions in disabled people's lives.

On reflection, this project could have expanded upon the emotional costs of contesting discrimination (see also Price and Shildrick, 1998). The golfers were sometimes curiously silent during disabling actions, and reactions, to their presence in the sport. Where were their reactions to patronising remarks? Does this exemplify a 'false consciousness' or indicate the emotional work involved in challenging disablism? I argued that the power imbalances they experienced might account for their acceptance of charity, patronage and paternalism as an active 'choice' in order to access the social space of golf. But did they also manage relations and relationships in golf in a cost/benefit way? For instance, are they aware they are experiencing disability discrimination, but consider the emotional costs of challenging it too great? Reeve (2003) argues that patronising remarks, stares and reactions can undermine the psycho-emotional well-being of disabled people; yet the way in which disabled people respond to disabling attitudes and prejudices can

further drain their emotional and physical resources. Disabled people may choose not to take on the role of 'educator', or may deliberately perform the 'grateful disabled person role', as a way to actively manage disabling social relations (Reeve, 2003). Was 'banter' an outlet for emotions of anger and frustration and a means of managing disabling social relations of help? Future research could usefully explore the role of emotions in disabling socio-spatial relations and practices.

Disability identities

Linked to the place of emotions, is the issue of disability identities. This thesis has emphasised the agency of disabled people as a corrective to the notion that disabled people are tragic, helpless victims of disability oppression, which has fuelled negative images of what it means to be disabled. In chapter two, I quoted Crow (1996, p.208) who argues that there is a need to tackle the contradictions and complexities of personal experiences of disability. The thesis as a whole never tried to fix or delimit the participants' experiences of disability. Chapter six in particular argued for a more nuanced understanding of disability identities, which enabled a richer picture of what it means to be disabled to emerge. I discussed the way in which there were losses to identification, but that the participants juggled multiple, fractured and contradictory identities; they were not only defined by their blindness, or a negative disability identity. The politics of generating more positive, richer images of disabled people and by multiplying identities means that it becomes possible to ask more nuanced questions about pain or the negative effects of psycho-emotional disablism.

Further questions and future possibilities are opened up from my discussion of disability identities. Section 6.4, showed that there was a creation of a blind space in blind golf, which allowed for 'blindisms'. Some of the players suggested that they could 'relax' in the spaces of blind golf, and thus relinquish a blind identity and become a person who happens to be blind. Is the SBGS creating a more inclusive space for blind people 'to be'? Are these kinds of spaces needed? This study did not adequately explore, however, whether the golfers 'came out' as blind beyond blind golf and their experiences of 'being' in other spaces. This raises more questions that

may be relevant for future studies to consider: Where does the identity of a blind golfer/blind person begin and end? Are there boundaries to disability identities? Is an 'inclusive space' one that can respect and relinquish disabling 'differences' in complex and contradictory ways? The significant point here is that disabled people have agency in the creation of disability identities and that a geographical approach can address such questions over disability identities in, perhaps, interesting and fresh ways.

7.4 Conclusion

This thesis has examined experiences of accessing, and participating in, golf among blind players in Scotland. It revealed a complex and contradictory story of disability in the everyday lives of blind golfers and has suggested potential directions for future research. Blind golf is a thriving sport and exists despite numerous barriers. The blind golfers were not overwhelmed by disabling barriers, but transgressed the boundaries of the 'non-disabled' spaces of golf. Achieving full and equal participation in golf, however, is more than the numbers of disabled people who have accessed the sport; it extends beyond their numerical representation. Access and inclusion depend upon the quality of social relations during participation as well as the role of impairment effects. Barriers are more than physical and exceed access issues – they include social relations. A social model of disability that relies upon a rigid distinction between impairment and disability, and focuses on structural barriers that create exclusion is therefore inadequate. Challenges to disabling social relations emerged from the actions of blind golfers, which suggests that disability oppression cannot be overcome by structural changes or the implementation of disability policies alone. Furthermore, their experience of the game is still influenced by impairment effects on the golf course and the necessity of a sighted person to act as a guide, no matter how accessible golf is for blind people. By foregrounding subjective experiences of disability, the project's emphasis has shifted the analysis from socio-spatial structures to socio-spatial practices and stressed the agency of blind people. This approach has enabled a more nuanced understanding of disabling

barriers to emerge, which greatly enriches discussion of processes of in/exclusion in relation to disability.

Appendix One: Interview Guide

1. HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED IN GOLF ORIGINALLY

- transition to blind golf

2. HOW YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN GOLF HAS DEVELOPED SINCE THEN

- experience of guides and player-guide relationship
- particular/own experiences of blind golf to invite comments on environment etc

3. ABOUT YOU AS A PERSON IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE PERSONAL CONTEXT OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN GOLF

- how golf and visual impairment fit into a sense of themselves
- identity issues
- including issues/experiences outside of golf and golf course
- dealing with others assumptions

4. YOUR THOUGHTS ON SOME ISSUES FACING THE SBGS AND BLIND GOLF MORE GENERALLY

- views on blind golf and politics of inclusion, separation or integration

1. HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED IN GOLF ORIGINALLY

Let's start off with how you became involved in golf?

If relevant, since you became involved in golf as a blind person, how did you find that?

How did people react to you taking up the game?
Did you consider golf to be a sport for blind people?
Did you experience any difficulties with any aspect of the sport?
Were there any types of barriers to participating in the sport as a blind golfer?

If relevant, what happened when your sight became impaired?

Did you experience any difficulties with any aspect of the sport?
Were there any types of barriers to participating in the sport as a blind golfer?
How did people react to you taking up the game?
Did you consider golf to be a sport for blind people?
Did your fellow golfers treat you any differently? How did you feel about that?

How did you first hear about the SBGS and get involved in the Society?

2. HOW HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN GOLF DEVELOPED SINCE THEN?

Tell me about the golf you play through the SBGS?

What district are you a member of?
What kind of events to you play in and where?
District/National/International level?
How did you feel playing in an international event?
Have you played in any blind golf events in any other countries? What as that like?

Do you find golf clubs that host blind golf events receptive to blind golf?

How do you find the members and staff at such golf clubs?
How do the members react?

Tell me about finding a guide?

Did you find it easy or difficult to get in touch with a guide?
Do you have a permanent guide?
Or do you use a variety of guides?
What do you think is better?
Do you find it easy to get out and practice with your guide?

Could you explain the role of the guide for me?

What do they do?
And why are they 'needed'?
What do you think makes for a 'good guide'?
Does the role of the guide extend beyond the golf course?

You mentioned X guides for you, could you tell me about your relationship on the golf course between you and your guide?

How would you describe the player-guide relationship?
Who makes and takes the decisions on the golf course?
What would you prefer?
Some golfers have commented on their irritation with guides telling them how to play a golf shot, even though they are the better player - who usually makes or takes the decisions in your experience?

I've noticed some golfers like to work out distance for themselves either by pacing, or sometimes when very close to the hole they feel where the flagstick or hole is. Could you tell me about that?
Are there ever tensions between you and your guide?
Are there other factors which come in to play in your relationship with your guide? Does it matter if you are friends, or married, or related? What do you think is best?

How do you think the Society could attract or recruit more guides?

Do you play golf out-with the Society?

Bounce games, competitive games?
If not - why is that?

If relevant, do you participate in competitions at your golf club?

How do you find that?
Have you found the golf club members and committee supportive?

What about just getting out to play some friendly, bounce games of golf?

Do you get to play these games of golf?
Who do you play with?

Do you find any differences between participating in blind golf events to other golf events such as at your golf club?

There's a wide range of visual impairments amongst the golfers. I've heard some talk about how they prefer sunnier days, or others prefer duller days, a preference for a particular type of golf course with trees etc, others talk about disliking slopes and longer grass etc as a B1 golfer. Could you tell me about any particular experiences you have like this on the golf course?

Other comments that I've heard are about the notion that although there is a range of visual impairment from B1 – B4, people say that it's a 'level playing field' on the golf course. Do you agree?

Get the handicapping system right and get rid of the eyesight categories?

**3. ABOUT YOU AS A PERSON IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE
PERSONAL CONTEXT OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN GOLF**

Why do you play golf or what motivates you to play golf?

What benefits, if any, do you think you gain from sport?

When I have told some people that I guide for blind golfers, they seemed astonished and amazed that people with little or no vision are able to play golf?

How would you respond to that?

How would you respond to such stereotypes and images of blind golf/golfers?

How do you feel when people are quizzical about blind golf, 'blind golf!?'?

How do you feel about this?

What do you think of such reactions and attitudes?

Do you think this reflects on the wider view of blind people in society more generally?

What image do you have of yourself?

4. YOUR THOUGHTS ON SOME ISSUES FACING THE SBGS AND BLIND GOLF MORE GENERALLY

Do you think there should be any more modifications to the Rules of Golf for blind golfers?

What improvements, if any, do you think are needed in golf to encourage more blind people to participate in the sport?

Some people mention the increasing cost of participating both in golf more generally and blind golf events, what do you think about this?

Are there any greater costs involved for blind golfers because of the need for a guide?

Any thoughts on junior golfers, more female golfers etc?

Do you think other organisations or people involved in the sport of golf could be more supportive of disabled people participating in golf?

What about the uneven distribution of blind golf?

Is the Society working to promote blind golf in the other areas of Scotland such as the Borders, for instance, or Grampian region which are currently under-represented in the membership?

What is the Society doing to bring in more junior golfers?

What is the Society doing to attract more female golfers?

To get more people with disabilities involved in sport seems to be high on the agenda for many, but there are different ways in which that can be achieved. As I'm interested in your thoughts on this, perhaps we can chat about where you think the future for blind golfers should be?

So what do you think about separating off blind golf?

Will there, or should there, be moves towards integration between blind golf and sighted golf? Or do you think there should be a separate organisation with specialist events for blind golfers?

What about the notion of pan-Disability golf and pan-Disability golf events? How do you feel about that?

Would you like more opportunities to play with sighted golfers?

What do you think is the best way forward?

What would be your ideal set-up for blind people to participate in golf?

Is there anything you feel we haven't covered?

HISTORY OF BLIND GOLF (which will be asked of some interviewees)

Could you tell me about the history of the Scottish Blind Golf Society?

When was the Society formed?

Who were the key players in getting the Society started?

What were the main ideas behind the formation of the Society?

Why was the Society formed?

In what ways has the Society changed over time?

Could you tell me about the history of Scottish Blind Golf?

Do you know anything about what happened before the formation of the Society?

Do you know anything about the history of blind people playing golf before the Society's were organised?

Could you tell me about the development of blind golf in Scotland since 1982?

Has the Society expanded?

Appendix Two: Coding Framework

Methodological Issues

Maccess	Any discussion of access issues, negotiating consent, paving the way kind of stuff whether at the beginning of participant observation or at the beginning of an interview etc.
Mroles	Different roles occupied such as guide, starter, camerawoman. Won't be large chunks of text like next code.
Mpositions	Identity positions such as elite golfer, married woman, sighted golfer, researcher, student etc etc and blurriness of these shifting and changing positions. To help with constructions of identity and difference in 'the field'.
Mreflections	Any time I reflect upon methodological issues or why I have come to a particular analysis or interpretation. EG, when I talk about how my background and experiences in golf I think are leading me to a particular interpretation of blind golf because I do comparisons all the time. Not assuming that these reflective processes are transparent and easily 'marked' by codes though. (Not trying to do the Goddess trick! Which applies to Mpositions and Mroles codes too. Coding as 'making visible' which is highly problematic part of the process).

History and development of blind golf

Hsbgs	History and development of SBGS. Story of the SBGS with initial aims, changing principles, who helped and who hindered etc, where blind golf first started and how were the first blind people involved in the setting up of the SBGS and so on. Including history of emergence of districts.
Hibga	History and development of international blind golf. Emergence of IBGA and international scene.

SBGS organisation / SBGS in the present / Organisation and provision of blind golf

SBGSwho (broken down to SBGSwho – guides, SBGSwho – players, SBGSwho – others)	Qualitative descriptions of who's involved in SBGS at board level and in decision-making processes. To help identify key movers and shakers in blind golf and social power relations in SBGS. Who makes and takes the decisions, how and who's involved in powerful positions within the SBGS.
SBGSinternalpolitics	Comments on SBGS as an organisation and internal wranglings to do with how blind golf is run etc. Also include here different viewpoints on what SBGS stands for, or 'should' stand for. Differences in opinion of the 'service' the SBGS should provide for its members and potential members.
SBGScharity	Charity aspects of SBGS and any mention of it's 'charitable' status. Comments on SBGS as a voluntary organisation and role of voluntary work / positions of board members etc. Includes willingness to accept 'charity' and mobilisation of 'charity' status.
SBGSfunding	Any chat about funding issues
SBGSsponsorship	Any chat about sponsors and sponsorship for blind golf (willingness to accept patronage and paternalism across codes SBGSvoluntary, SBGSfunding and this code).
SBGSpatrons	Any discussion or mention of patrons of the Society
SBGSkeyissues	Whenever SBGS members or Board lay out or discuss what they think are the key issues facing the SBGS/blind golf. This will help me to check what they find important against my agenda and what I find important aspects.
SBGSmembership	Whenever anyone discusses issues to do with membership, lack of blind people coming into blind golf etc. Include comparisons made with blind bowls' popularity. Ideas on why so few blind golfers or how to increase membership.
SBGSspreadtheword	Discussions of the SBGS spread the word policy and campaigning/lobbying component of Society through attempts to raise any awareness about blind golf.
SBGSinternational	Discussion of relations with IBGA and other countries
BGimprovements	Comments on any improvements that could be made to blind golf and organisation or blind golf, SBGS. This may also include any discussions about the future of blind golf.

Participation in blind golf

BGdescriptions	Qualitative descriptions of blind golfers which includes indicators across age, class, sight category, blind or blinded and so on.
BGcomingin	Stories about coming into blind golf, how they first heard about golf and their initial feelings, thoughts on entering / becoming involved with blind golf. (There may be a little overlap with BGrepresentations codes because of some of the preconceptions

	about blind golf and blind people that the players articulate) (Links to identity issues of borders of who's a blind golfer and who's a golfer who happens to be blind)
BGinformation	Any discussion of availability and accessibility of finding out information, especially if information is about blind golf. (Information barrier, lack of awareness barrier)
BGregistration	Any discussion of registration issues. (Acts as another barrier)
BGevents	Any discussion of experiences of golf played through the SBGS. Includes things like comments on SBGS events like the criticisms of events being predominantly held during the week and things like that too etc. Basically any comments on or experiences of SBGS events.
BGgolfclubs	Discussion, and experiences of, the golf clubs that host blind golf events. Includes descriptions of golf clubs where blind golf events are played. This also connects with 'Interactions with others' theme. Includes experiences at golf clubs outwith blind golf too.
BGinternational	Participation in internationals and international blind golf
BGcourse	Stories and comments on golf course experiences such as touch, feel, light, 'impairment effects', how they best like to gain information on the golf course (which will overlap with PG codes). This includes discussion of materiality of the golfing environment such as heather, thick rough, slopes, colours, lack of trees. (This might also link sometimes to golfers comments on 'the need for a guide' in Grole)
BGwhy	Discussions of why become involved in blind golf or why play blind golf
BGbenefits	Specific discussions on benefits of playing golf and involvement in blind golf (health, social, comradery etc)
BGdistrict	Anything to do with blind golf participation at district level. This includes discussions on organisation of blind golf at district level, therefore any aspect of District golf when mentioned goes here. To find out what's happening at District level.
BGcosts	Any comments on costs of participation in blind golf or financial issues to do with golf (As different from SBGSfunding, SBGSsponsorship, but may connect to these codes at some points. So costs for golfers as opposed to costs at SBGS level – then I can look up both codes when thinking about any 'Financial barriers').
BGmunicipal	Discussion of, or any mention of, participation in golf through municipal golf courses (when blind or sighted). Relates to thinking about accessibility issues in golf.
BGgender	Anything on gender issues and gender-relations in blind golf (both participation and organisation)
BGage	Any discussion of age-related issues
BGsightcategories	Any discussion of sight categories. Includes comments on different levels of visual impairment.
BGb1	Any specific comments on B1 players
BGb4	Any specific comments on B4 players
BGhandicapping	Anytime there is any discussion of handicapping systems used or

	golf handicaps/blind golf handicaps
BGcheating	Discussion of cheating in blind golf
BGbanter	Any blind golf humour, jokes, blind golf chat such as telling of blind golf stories or happenings at events, blind golf memories/nostalgia. (Group identity boundaries)
BGspeed	Any comments on speed of play in blind golf (connected to above code which encapsulates blind golf chat although above will usually be joking moments as opposed to more 'serious' discussions about pace of play and time in blind golf)
BGcompare	Everytime there is a discussion of comparisons between blind golf and sighted golf, differences and similarities between the two. (Part of construction of blind golf is to make these comparisons)
RulesOfGolf	Any discussion of the rules of golf – for blind golfers, modifications to or further changes desired etc.

Participation in golf

Outsidegolf	Any discussion of golf played outwith SBGS whether that be bounce games, club medals or whatever. This includes any comparisons made about SBGS golf and club golf (as different from BGcompare which is about wider comparisons that get made as opposed to individual experiences of participation and preferences at this level). (Links with Relations With Others theme)
OGmembership	Discussion of membership of other golf clubs outwith the SBGS. This will include how golf clubs have treated blind members, policies towards blind golfers such as reduced membership fees, waiving waiting list etc.

Guides and player-guide relationship

Grole	Comments on the role of the guide, including how players want or prefer to be guided. Also includes comments on the 'necessity' of the guide. Might be a slight overlap between Grole and PGplayers, PGguides, BGoncourse codes.
Gfind	Stories about finding a guide
Gavailability	Discussions on the availability of guide (lack of guides, difficulty in 'recruiting' more guides etc)
Gwho	Any mention of who are, or who become, guides (partners, friends, wives, volunteers etc). Includes stories from guides about how they became involved and my qualitative descriptions of guides.
Gwhy	Comments from guides about why they are involved in blind golf and any benefits or disadvantages they feel to participating in blind golf.
PGplayers	Players comments on the player-guide relationship, including comments about guides in general. Blaming, praising, complaints about player-guide aspects from the players perspective. (Links

	with Interactions with others – treatment by guides/sighted people)
PGme	My comments on the player-guide relationship.
PGguides	Comments about the player-guide relationship from the guides. Guides talking about the golfers.
PGoncourse	Any discussion of player-guide relations on the golf course.
PGbeyond	Any discussion of player-guide relationship beyond the golf course. Capturing how pg relations extend beyond the golf course rather than 'golf guiding'. Both players and guides often stress how the player-guide aspects extend beyond the actual guiding on the golf course.

Interactions/relations with others

RwOgolfers	Experiences of other (sighted) golfers, interactions with non-SBGS members at any time whether in own golf club that member of outwith Society, or whilst at an SBGS event or another club etc. This includes other golfers comments on blind golf when they see blind golfers at their clubs that I have recorded as well as blind golfers stories of happenings with sighted golfers etc. (May overlap with BGrepresentations code too)
RwOorganisations	The SBGS', and blind golfers', relations with and experiences of other organisations/institutions such as sportscotland, RNIB, SGU, R&A etc.
RwOcouncils	Discussions involving local authorities' and blind golf
RwOmedia	Any discussion of the media or media coverage
(BGgolfclubs)	Remember that this code is also very much connected to this theme of 'interactions with others' for analysis of social relations within the spaces of blind golf

Politics of inclusion, separation or integration

BGrepresentations	Images of blind golfers and constructions of blind golf. This includes stereotypes of blind golf / blind golfers / blind people, amazement reactions, supercrip image, that blind people can't / shouldn't play golf (attitudinal barriers). These images may be ones which blind golfers create as well as other people in their preconceptions and perceptions of blind golf / blindness. The discussions of how the blind golfers feel about these representations (like quizzical nature of blind golf? Blind golf?!), resistance to them, why they exist and how to challenge or break down this barrier will also be coded here. [Representations barrier / the image problem]
BGinclusion	Any discussion of 'inclusion' issues in rhetoric or practices. This includes expressing a desire for 'inclusion and integration' or comments about the 'integration' aspects of blind golf. EG

	especially when discussion of the involvement of guides = 'integration'. SBGS policies and attitudes of inclusion and integration as well as individual players. Includes comments about 'pan-disability' golf.
BGseparate	Expresses a desire for separation and recognition of blind golf as a sport in its own right. Where not wanting 'integration' or 'inclusion' in participation policies, but creation of a space for blind golf (albeit recognised and respected in wider golfing circles). BGinclusion and BGseparate codes therefore being used to answer questions of 'specialist' provision v mainstream

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